Ejitu Ota

The Igbo State Union, 1936-1966: A Study in Ethnic Nationalism

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DEDICATION

To all Sons and Daughters of Igboland: the Dead, the Living, and the Unborn.

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PREFACE

Ethnicity has often been blamed for conflicts and disintegration in Africa. As a matter of fact, in the twentieth century, many wars and civil strife in the continent were fought along ethnic lines and were, indeed, caused by ethnic rivalries. Under such circumstances, it is logical to place the blame for the disunity in many African countries on the doorstep of ethnicity. Nigeria is not an exception. She has had her fair share of the challenges of statehood.

During the colonial era and the period of Nigeria's First Republic (1960-1966), the country experienced series of socio-political resentments and antagonisms among her ethnic groups. Minority ethnic groups feared the dominance of the three major groups—Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba, whereas the three big groups rivalled among themselves every step of the way. To protect the interest of their people, elite nationalists from both the minority and majority groups formed ethnically-based associations. Prominent among them was the Ibibio State Union formed in 1928, Igbo State Union in 1936, Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1945, and Jamiyya Mutanen Arewa in 1948, as well as the Urhobo Brotherly Society in 1949. When Nigeria's First Republic collapsed in 1966, the many political upheavals which the country found itself in were partly blamed on those ethnic associations and their activities. Consequently, the new military regime proscribed the groups, banning their activities in order to bind the nation together and integrate her different peoples.

If ethnicity can be held accountable for disunity in Africa, is it not logical to argue that unions and associations formed along ethnic lines were at the heart of the disunity? On the other hand, is it possible to absolve ethnic unions of blame over the disunity which ethnic skirmishes gave rise to? If it is possible, then it is

necessary to demonstrate how and where historical evidence supports such a possibility.

This book studies the Igbo State Union in south-eastern Nigeria as an organised ethnic association in twentieth century Africa. It seeks to understand the nature of ethnic politics in anti-colonial nationalism and nation-building by examining the integrative or disintegrative roles of the Igbo State Union in colonial and early independent Nigeria. As Nigerian nationalists worked towards the independence of their country, especially in the two decades before the 1960s, ethnic politics, anti-colonial nationalism and nation-building prominently featured in their politics. Consequently, when elite Igbo nationalists formed the Igbo Federal Union in 1936, it was not only ethnicity that was on their minds: they were also interested in anti-colonial nationalism as well as nation-building. In addition, they understood that achieving independence for Nigeria was the collective responsibility of all ethnic and interest groups in the country and that without concerted efforts, the objective would remain elusive. Integration was, therefore, not discretionary; it was an unconditional option.

To determine if the Igbo State Union was integrative or otherwise, this book surveys the background to ethnic nationalism in Nigeria to gain insights to the reasons for founding the Igbo State Union (previously the Igbo Federal Union). It studies the aims and objectives of the Union to find if they were integrative or disintegrative. If the aims and objectives were integrative, was the organisation's modus operandi also integrative or otherwise? This question is important because a Union could aim at achieving integrative ends whereas the processes it uses to achieve those ends are counterproductive, generating factors that favour disunity rather than unity. Thus, while this book studies what the Igbo State Union aimed to achieve, achieved and failed to accomplish, it also investigates if the Union's

actions were integrative or otherwise and if in the end, it worked for unity or disunity in Nigeria.

In the analyses that follow, one is not trying to study an ethnic union that demanded administrative control over a territory (Igboland) within Nigeria through a pan-ethnic union. This is precisely what some people might interpret ethnic nationalism to mean. In this context, the meaning of ethnic nationalism is different because Igbo ethnic nationalism between 1936 and 1966 (as embodied in the Igbo State Union) never aspired to a nation-state status and recognition. On the contrary, it centred its energy on awakening and strengthening the consciousness of the Igbo as members of an emerging strong and united Nigeria.

Elite Igbo nationalists and businessmen who, by the 1940s, were already integrated Nigerians, formed the Igbo State Union. Prior to 1960, it was the only Nigerian ethnic organisation whose members were significantly present in every corner of Nigeria, living and developing on the idea of a united Nigeria. By their successes at individually integrating themselves in different parts of Nigeria, benefiting from that integration and contributing towards the growth of the non-Igbo areas where they lived, one sees that those Igbo State Union members understood the modus operandi for integration in Nigeria. It is, thus, logical to argue that such members' integrative attitudes also shaped and influenced the Igbo State Union they formed, making the Union to be integrative rather than disintegrative—an argument which this book explores.

It is correct to aver that the birth of the phenomenon of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria resulted from the emergence of the colonial urban settings. For one thing, the colonization of Nigeria by the British led to the growth of urban centres, and for another, such places attracted a lot of migrants from the countryside. The new urban settings brought together people who were hitherto confined largely to their

immediate village environments. Over time, there arose a competition for the scarce resources available in the colonial urban areas. Since members of virtually every Nigerian ethnic group were involved in this competition, identification with and affiliation to one's ethnic group became a sine qua non. The earlier urban settlers naturally came to feel obliged to render assistance to the new migrants from their respective villages.

It was against this background that the Igbo State Union came into existence, first as a forum for different Igbo unions in Nigeria's new urban areas. From inception, the Union assigned to itself the role of a spokesman, defender and arbiter of the Igbo people that lived in various parts of Nigeria in the colonial and early post-colonial eras. By that, the Union worked to fix the Igbo squarely into the Nigerian society which they recognized as home. Until May 1966 when it was proscribed by the Aguyi Ironsi military regime, the Igbo State Union was the only organization that was justifiably regarded as pan-Igbo in outlook.

Unfortunately, no sustained research work appears to have been carried out on the activities of the Igbo State Union. What one sees is usually a passing mention of it, as in Audrey Smock's "Ibo Politics" (1977), James S. Coleman's, "Nigeria: Background to Nationalism" (1958), and Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, "Historical Dictionary of Nigeria" (2009), among others. The result is that without a detailed research work, the Union and its activities have sometimes been misunderstood and misinterpreted. In some cases, the Union is discussed based on assumptions or opinions held by a section of the public. One example is the claim in some quarters that the Union tried to use Igbo numerical strength to dominate other ethnic groups in the then Eastern Nigeria. Another is the general opinion held globally about ethnic organisations, that is, because the Union was pan-Igbo in

outlook, it was so ethnocentric and selfish that its activities challenged both nation-building and national integration in the country.

It is, therefore, the intention of this book to examine the contributions of the Igbo State Union to the economic and educational advancement of Igbo people in particular and Nigeria in general during the period under review. It will further survey how, despite the lack of a unifying traditional political structure in Igboland prior to 1936, the Union raised Igbo consciousness towards nation-building and became an umbrella to challenge colonial injustices. In the process, the Union did not only unite and protect the Igbo and their interests, it also rallied them against imperialism, helped prepare the political and intellectual manpower which independent Nigeria needed, and produced aspects of the framework that kick-started Nigeria in 1960. Because the Igbo did not live in isolation, the Union also worked along with other Nigerian ethnic groups and non-Igbo nationalists. This situation sometimes led to cooperation and at other times to socio-political frictions and fights between groups, a natural phenomenon in every human community.

INTRODUCTION

It is not often that one comes across academic studies that deal with the issue of ethnic nationalism. Where such works exist, they are hardly of relevance to the study of History as an academic discipline, and they rarely use ethnic unions or associations as case studies. Put succinctly, most of the works on ethnic nationalism are sociological in nature and outlook, although they are everywhere hedged about by historical antecedents. This is understandable because of the complementary nature and interests of the two disciplines. In particular, African Sociologists and Historians cannot help encroaching on each other's field in the course of their researches and writings. Without doubt, there is the inevitability of a struggle for territory between the two disciplines and other human sciences.[1]

History has the main function of ensuring that the memory of past events and achievements are not lost over time. Thus, a holistic approach to historical investigations, especially in relation to ethnic unions, becomes inevitable. Moreover, if one must recognize the fact that no social situation or past event can be fully examined in all its changing aspects and since it then becomes imperative to be selective in such an undertaking, then the study of History could be seen as the point of origin of the other human sciences.[2] Thus, while relying more on the historical approach, this study adopts the interdisciplinary approach essentially because much of the available documentation is sparse. The work makes occasional resort to evidences from sources that are not historical. As shall appreciated at the end of this study, an inter-disciplinarian approach to African studies ensures that the picture of the past is reconstructed with clarity, an objective no one source alone can achieve. In this particular case, Sociology has

provided insights that, in no small measure, illuminated the task of examining a socio-political institution, the Igbo State Union.

The Igbo State Union is one of those institutions whose study brings the disciplines of History and Sociology together. The emphasis of Sociology on the lives and activities of men in different human communities presents a veritable pool of information for the professional Historian. This is so because Sociology attempts to describe and interpret the results of group life in social behavioural patterns, folkways and mores and the more permanent institutional controls and guides.[3] Likewise, History is concerned with examining the behaviour of groups in economic, political, military, aesthetic and religious situations. Most of the materials and documents consulted in the course of this research, though largely sociological, bear much resemblance to the discipline of History. In the main however, all sources, historical and sociological, embrace both the causes and consequences of group life, giving a sort of generalized view of social process and causation.

As the title clearly indicates, this is a work on ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. Its importance lies in the fact that the analysis spans two periods—the colonial and post-colonial periods. In essence, the organization under review, that is, the Igbo State Union, although avowedly socio-cultural, was not apolitical. Opinions may vary on its political role, but the Igbo State Union, even if it had wanted to, could not help getting involved in the nationalist struggles of the colonial period and the post-independence politics of Nigeria.[4]

One important factor that influenced the choice of the Igbo State Union for investigation is Ken Saro-Wiwa's book, *On a Darkling Plain: An Account of the*

Nigerian Civil War [5] In the book, Saro-Wiwa tried to create the impression that the Igbo State Union was an instrument of dominance employed by the majority Igbo ethnic group of the former Eastern Region against the minorities of the region. If this research is anything to go by, then nothing could be farther from the truth than Saro-Wiwa's claims. Much as one is not holding brief for the Union, it is argued that in his book, Saro-Wiwa ended up contradicting himself, exposing an embarrassing ignorance of the Igbo State Union and what it stood for. While acknowledging the various challenges which it had to contend with in colonial Nigeria, Saro-Wiwa failed to understand that the Igbo State Union did not encourage the competitions in the then Eastern Region but, like other ethnic organisatons, found itself in it and also tried to respond. As a matter of fact, every ethnic group aspired to rise above the other, and that aspiration was, of course, very human. If, as Saro-Wiwa claims, the Union sought to ensure Igbo domination of other ethnic principalities in Eastern Nigeria, then this must have been a latter-day development.[6] It cannot be treated in isolation of the prevailing circumstances then. This is because as a dynamic organization, the vicissitudes of Nigerian politics from the 1930s could not have failed to influence the Igbo State Union.

The Igbo State Union was not, therefore, against the interests of other ethnic groups, nor was it interested in obstructing their advancement. If anything, it was ready to cooperate with them. However, if in the process of the Union fighting for the Igbo, eastern minorities felt disaffected, it was a wrongly placed anger. They had their own ethnic unions that sought to achieve the same objective as the Igbo. Therefore, if their ethnic unions failed them or had some frustrations, they should not blame the Igbo who also had their own share of the frustrations.

In other words, the Igbo State Union was not suppressive or domineering. But in a field where men fight for space and resources, those who loose always blame those who gain. If the Igbo gained, it was not by feeding on or working against ethnic minority interests. It was because they were industrious, confronted hard situations headlong, ventured into risks from which other Nigerians ran, and had a culture that taught them to explore and spread their nets as far as possible and ensure that they returned with laurels.

Thus, when other Nigerians took a break, the Igbo worked. It is, therefore, unfair to skip this aspect of Nigerian history to arrive at the conclusion that since the Igbo dominated numerically, politically and economically in the former Eastern Region, it must be because the Igbo State Union worked to ensure it by trampling on the interests of the ethnic minorities. If through hard work and fortitude the Igbo advanced ahead of others and those others felt dominated, the Igbo cannot be blamed, attacked or criticised for it.

Any insinuation, such as Saro-Wiwa's, that the Igbo State Union was an instrument of domination against minority ethnic groups in Eastern Nigeria is also a suggestion that the Union created or instigated disunity in Nigeria. Among other reasons, it was the desire to correct such suggestions that motivated the present research. This inevitably meant that a thorough investigation of the Igbo State Union, from its origin, organizational structure to achievements and problems up to 1966 must be carried out. The research findings show that the formation of the Union (first as the Igbo Federal Union in 1936 and later the Igbo State Union in 1948) owed much to the conditions in which Igbo settler communities in Nigeria's urban centres found themselves. Its formation was also a novel idea in the sense

that prior to its inauguration, the Igbo as a group, had never had any history of coming together under one umbrella organization for whatever reasons.[7]

The urge to work on the Igbo State Union was irresistible, though overwhelming. This is because despite its obvious contributions to Nigeria's political and social history, not much attempts had been made to carry out any major academic research on the activities of the Union. No major scholarly book has also been published on the Union. One does not know whether this has been deliberate or it has been an oversight on the part of Historians and Sociologists. Whatever may be the reason for this obvious inaction, it is the intention of this book to add to the scant literature available on the Igbo State Union. The Union, despite the limitations of the difficult political terrain of Nigeria between 1945 and 1966, had a lot to be commended for. It is true, as Ugbana Ukpana has argued; that during the opening years of the colonial period, the Igbo constituted the least developed of Nigeria's major ethnic groups.[8] Moreover, colonial policies in the North and West, when compared with what obtained in the East, certainly showed a bias against the Igbo and other ethnic groups in that part of Nigeria. Politically and economically, therefore, the Igbo considered themselves unfairly treated by the British. It was their desire to escape from such a position that compelled Igbo leaders to envisage the establishment of an Igbo State within a united Nigeria.

Accordingly, it is not wrong to say that the emergence of ethnic organizations like the Igbo State Union was as a result of the desire to achieve competitive progress under the colonial setting. As evidence in subsequent chapters will show, the Igbo State Union, though committed to the welfare of the Igbo, nevertheless believed that this could only be possible in a strong and united

Nigeria. Similarly, the Union tried, at least in the urban centres, to create in-group cohesion by reinforcing Igbo loyalties and identities against stereotypes which other groups had of the Igbo. Indeed, as Uma Eleazu has observed, ethnic unions like the Igbo State Union were more or less "...a response to a conflictual situation that had Nigeria as the ordering system.[9]

This study of the Igbo State Union is aimed at separating a particular germ from the confusion of generality. As already stated, its intention is to find out if it is true, as some people might wish to argue or have argued, that ethnicity as embodied in ethnically-based associations is a disintegrative rather than an integrative factor in nation-building.[10] To this end, an attempt will be made to deal with the historical background and the underlying social and economic conditions that prepared the way for the emergence of the Igbo State Union. The focus of the analysis, therefore, is to convey what is believed to have happened regarding the activities of the Igbo State Union and why it happened. Similarly, it will discuss evidence and fact and to give an idea as well as an evaluation of the controversies that may have been instigated by the roles of the Igbo State Union during its period of existence. Such controversies, no doubt, informed the excursion into this academic disquisition and to rise above the vulgar mythology of those who have been at pains to ignore the theoretical implication of colonialism and nationalistic politics in Nigeria before 1966.

It is a fact that the Igbo State Union emerged because the Igbo, like other Nigerians, felt a poignant injustice of subordination in colonial Nigeria. Igbo people in the urban areas shared common disabilities and gradually became acutely aware of the many common elements in their heritage. These formed the basis for

the formation of the Union. To argue otherwise, perhaps, would be to stand history on its head and stimulate accusations of the Igbo as aggressive savages with brazen insensitivity and arrogant selfishness in their dealings with other groups. This is so because in the course of the research and as demonstrated in this book, Igbo ethnic nationalism never threatened Nigeria's unity but existed within the context of the Nigerian federation. If anything near the Igbo threatened the country, it was not what the Igbo did or failed to do, but what was done against them and against which they fought back.

However, the Igbo State Union tried to protect and project Igbo interests in colonial and early post-colonial Nigeria. It aimed at confronting enemies of Igbo welfare in order to advance the interests of the ethnic group. This was as a result of the inherent competition occasioned by British colonialism and Yoruba dominance, a situation that introduced politics into non-political situations and exposed ethnic nationalism in Nigeria to conflict and antagonism. There was, in other words, a general struggle involving every Nigerian ethnic group, including minority groups. Those who failed to succeed in the competition should not blame those who succeeded.

The scope of this study is limited to the period between 1936 and 1966. It was in 1936 that the Igbo settler community in Lagos was forced by a concatenation of circumstances to come together to form the Igbo Federal Union.[11] This later metamorphosed into the Igbo State Union in 1948, and in 1966, the Union, along with other ethnic associations, were banned through a Decree by the military administration of General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi.

Though the scope seems a bit long, it is of utmost importance in the sense that the periods covered are enough to show the stages through which the Union

passed. They also give a holistic overview of the activities of the Union at the high point of the nationalist struggle from the last days of colonialism to the early years of independence. These periods, indeed, reveal a lot about the Nigerian state and the oversensitivity of the ethnic factor in domestic politics. The periods covered in the book will, therefore, enable readers to understand the problem of ethnic nationalism in true perspective as well as to open up ways of rethinking ethnic relations in Nigeria.

As for the major concepts employed here, many defy any precise meanings. For one thing, various authors and writers have their own definitions, and for another, such definitions correspond with the various disciplines that have investigated or researched on areas that bear much relevance to these concepts. These differences appear to be more pronounced in works written by Africans on Africa and in those of non-Africans working on African subjects. At other times too, they are found in works of a more generalized or conventional nature, works that have no particular areas of focus. For instance, it is not uncommon to read or hear of ethnic groups being synonymous with races or religions, or languages and culture. It all depends on the person's attitude to his subject(s). Paul R. Brass, for instance, defines ethnic groups in three ways, viz: in terms of objectives attributes, with reference to subjective feelings, and in relation to behavior.[12] In his words, "...there must be some distinguishing cultural marks that clearly separate one group of people from another...."[13] Such marks, by inference, could be language, territory, religion, skin colour, diet or any other objective attributes. Thus, he seems to believe that objective cultural marks which are susceptible to change and variation, distinguish one ethnic group from another.

For Audrey Chapman Smock, an ethnic group refers to "...people bound together by felt ties of kinship or contiguity."[14] A similar view is expressed by Aldan Southall who sees ethnic groups as, "...those in which the primary condition of membership is derivation from... a territorial community... which is felt to be distinctive in culture."[15] Other writers, like Stanley Lieberson, use "race" and "ethnic" interchangeably as if they mean the same thing.[16] To him, there is really no difference between the two concepts. That view is countered by H. S. Morris who posits that:

> *An ethnic group is a distinctive category of the population in a larger society whose culture is usually different from its own. The members of such a group are, or feel themselves, or are thought to be bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture.*[17]

Wendell Bell and Walter E. Freeman do not believe so much in territorial contiguity as a determinant of an ethnic group.[18] To them, language and culture, not territory, are the major criteria in defining an ethnic group. Arnold Dashefsky has argued in a similar vein. He defines an ethnic group as a group of individuals with a shared sense of peoplehood that has as its basis, presumed shared socio-cultural experiences and/or similar physical characteristics.[19]

Implicit in these definitions is the fact that as a concept, an ethnic group exhibits cultural uniformities within it and cultural differences between it and other

groups. Such other groups are likely to view them as a religious, racial or linguistic group. Thus, the concept is a relative one since it could be evaluated on both objective and subjective criteria. Indeed, membership in an ethnic group is more or less a matter of social definition, interplay of the members' self-definition, as well as the definition which other groups ascribe to them.

In some instances, an ethnic group could be found within a specific territory. But in a number of cases, it could defy territorial limits, as the case of the Yoruba in Nigeria and Benin Republic and the Hausa in Nigeria, Niger and Ghana. The Jewish population is also a typical example. Territorial exclusiveness may, therefore, not be a very relevant criterion for defining an ethnic group. The same is largely true of religion. What matters is a sense of common ancestry, real or putative.

Other concepts that deserve attention and clarification include ethnicity, ethnicism, nation, nationalism, federalism, ethnocentrism, pluralism, stereotype, development, and nation-building. The definitions of these concepts are neither specific nor unique. They serve basically as guides to the analysis of this work. Put concisely, these concepts provide an insightful interpretation of the issues at stake, namely the study of ethnic nationalism in the context of a multi-ethnic federal state. It, therefore, follows that whatever definitions are made here reflect the general rather than the specific. The idea is to avoid making a concept fetish by restricting its relevance in the study. Also, while some of these terms do not lend themselves to much controversies, others tend to elicit varied and sometimes contradictory interpretations.

The concept of ethnicity is one of such terms that do not have a concise meaning. It used to be fashionable for Euro-centric writers and researchers to use the term "tribalism" whenever they refer to African societies and the relationships between such societies and their peoples. This attitude, according to Maxwell

Owusu, was based on the wrong assumption that, "...ethnicity represents an evolutionary advance, after which Africans might eventually attain a true sense of nationhood!"[20] Such writers believe that the term "ethnicity" is more appropriate to the industrialized societies of Europe and North America. In recent times, however, the term 'tribalism' has come to be viewed as pejorative and it is being increasingly substituted with ethnicity. Thus, ethnicity is not a primordial arrangement that has been brought forward, as it were, by conservative people.

Both Abner Cohen[21] and Smock[22] hold the view that ethnicity is basically a political factor rather than a value system or a cultural phenomenon. It is partly subjective and partly relative for, as Pierre van den Berghe has pointed out, it is determined by both the existence of a shared culture and subjective reality based on in-group identification as well as ascription of status by other groups.[23] The objective and subjective components of ethnicity are not to be seen as traditional. Rather, they are a function of the urban social situation to which members of an ethnic group may find themselves in. This does not, of course, obfuscate Marc Howard Ross' opinion that the concept of ethnicity, rather than being a constant in urban areas, is a variable.[24] It could also be regarded as an inclusive concept to the extent that it emphasizes group identity and exclusiveness vis-a-vis other groups within a given society.[25]

The important fact, however, in understanding the concept is that like the term "ethnic group", it is a characteristic distinctive cultural or sub-cultural trait that tends to set groups apart or separate from others. Strong attachments to one's ethnic group could develop when groups (be they racial, social, linguistics or cultural) living in the same society, fail or refuse to merge but retain their own individual group identities.[26] Ethnicity, therefore, refers to a feeling of loyalty which members of an ethnic group attach to such a group, especially when they come into contact with other groups. As shall be seen later, it is much more pronounced in the economic and political areas than in social interactions.

Similarly, ethnicism and ethnicity refer basically to the same level of solidarity. That is to say, both concepts are fundamentally group phenomena. They usually occur in situations of competition for scarce resources, especially in the urban centres. In particular, it is more likely to result in situations where there is a dominant group in the society and where such a group, either by accident or design, excludes others from partaking in the sharing of positions and resources.[27] For example, the Ikwere Igbo felt dominated by the other Igbo in the struggle for resources and opportunities in Port Harcourt between the 1940s and 1960s. Before the end of the 1960s, it became acceptable to the majority of them to opt out of the Igbo ethnic umbrella and define themselves as a minority ethnic family in Nigeria.

By ethnocentrism is meant a situation where individual attitudes and emotions, as well as cultural symbols and ideologies are used to measure every other individual(s). In other words, it is a view of things in which one's own group is seen as the standard by which all other groups are rated.[28] Thus, ethnocentrism is

the belief that one's own culture or way of life is the best and by which other cultures or ways of life are looked upon with contempt. Ethnocentrism is also usually the product of situations, be they historical, economic or political. Sometimes, it could be a reaction against the contempt and prejudices of other groups, especially where a particular group had attained and exceeded the levels and standards which its neigbours had previously used against it. This appears to have been the case with the Igbo during the period under consideration. However, ethnocentrism has been identified with a major problem. According to Bagley Marret and Cheryl Leggon:

> *One consequence of ethnocentrism is that the baseline group develops and enforces a double standard in which one set of norms governs interaction among members of the baseline or in-group, and a different set of norms governs interaction between group members and those on the outside.*[29]

Stereotyping is closely related to ethnocentrism. According to Psychologists and Sociologists, it is idiosyncratic in nature and represents personalized beliefs.[30] In other words, like ethnocentrism, it is a form of categorizing behaviour whereby an individual or group depends on just one characteristic to generate some expectations or attributions. Among the conditions that may occasion stereotyping is environmental complexity, though the notion also applies to other circumstances where the stimulus input is relatively meagre, for example, in ethnic labels or target persons, both of which are usually defined in terms of physical attributes. Because relationships between individuals could elicit a great deal of stereotyping,

it is considered a useful concept in the analysis of ethnic relations. It is, indeed, a product of socialization whose importance lie in the fact that it is useful in expressing social and cultural attitudes. Denigration and over-generalization are, thus, two basic ingredients of stereotyping.

The term "pluralism" is usually an allusion to societies that are characterized by cultural diversity and social cleavages between population groups in the same political unit. According to Leo Kuper, pluralism is defined in terms of both structure and culture as connoting simultaneously, "...a social structure characterized by fundamental discontinuities and cleavages, and a cultural complex based on systematic institutional diversity."[31] By implication therefore, a major characteristic of a plural society is the existence of diverse social and cultural elements. Usually, there is relatively little consensus in such a society since there is always a dominant group.[32] As a genetic concept, pluralism describes a distinctive structure of group relations that is so complex as to defy any precise definition. For instance, it could be examined against a variety of backgrounds, such as class division, religious differences or cultural or ethnic backgrounds. One obvious structural characteristic of a plural society however, is the existence of a dominant group which could even be a numerical minority.[33]

When one talks of a nation, the idea being expressed is that of a collectivity of people(s) within a defined territory and who are held together by a shared solidarity. Such a people(s) place loyalty to the community as a whole over any other conflicting loyalties. Dankwart Rustow believes that the concept of nationhood is a variable in the sense that no nation, so defined, approximates the

ideal type.[34] However, he listed geography, history, popular will and language as necessary ingredients in the formation of national identity. These so-called traditional determinants of nationality could be supported by other factors like modernization, social communication, and political tradition. That notwithstanding, in examining pre-colonial Africa, one is bound to encounter conceptual problems relating to the definition of what constitutes a national unit as at that time. Thus, as used in the work, "nation" refers essentially to the more general usage, namely a community of people with a shared solidarity and confined to a defined territory. It does not matter whether or not such a collectivity is plural.

Similarly, the definition of nationalism is not restricted to reaction against external forces, though the presence of Europeans in Africa ignited African nationalism.[35] Viewed as a whole, however, nationalism in Africa developed first as a generalized movement for African freedom from European rule before it acquired political objectives and became localized as separate and distinctive currents, each driving towards the political independence of a given administrative and territorial unit ruled by the same colonial power. As used here, however, the concept of nationalism means the ability of the citizens of a given nation to identify their hopes and aspirations with those of their nation. It, therefore, rests on the assumption that a nation must be in existence and that the members of such a nation must place loyalty to the nation as a whole over any other conflicting loyalties. In other words, nationalism is a historical phenomenon that involves the subordinating of personal interests and parochial loyalties and interests by individuals to the promotion of national loyalties and interests. It is viewed as

being synonymous with patriotism, which denotes a sense of love for one's nation higher and above love for self.[36] Its evolution is generally linked to two major historical events—the French Revolution of 1789, and the anti-colonial movements of African and Asian peoples in the 20th century.

On its part, nation-building refers to the sum-total of all policies and efforts devoted towards bringing the disparate constituents of a given territory into one united sovereign nation. This must of necessity include the identification and possible eradication of socio-economic inequalities, social and geographical immobility, political victimization, economic stagnation and political instability, among others. From whatever angle it is viewed, nation-building involves an aggregation of the interests of ethnic and other principalities and harnessing same to fortify the foundation of the nation.[37] It could be subsumed under political development and national integration, which involve three major components, namely, the institutionalization of the administrative and political structures, political integration, and the modernization of cultural attitudes.

Federalism is a concept of social and political organization, and emerged as a sort of functional arrangement between communities for living and working together within the same sovereign nation. However, the component units in a federation are allowed to preserve a measure of separate identity. In the words of Shridath S. Ramphal, a one-time Secretary-General of the Commonwealth:

> *...federalism is perhaps best seen as a spectrum of unity beyond the extremities of which are on the one hand, clusters of states without any systematic arrangement for unified action and, on the other, the fully unified state in which sovereignty is indivisible.*[38]

By implication then, a federal state is one where power is unified within the constituent parts of a state and where such power is equally decentralized within the unified state. In other words, federalism implies a formal division of powers between or among levels of government. Thus, as Nnamdi Azikiwe rightly argued, in a federal arrangement, there must be a compromise between conflicting interests so as to ensure a harmonious union of apparently irreconcilable elements.[39] To be workable, a federation must reorganize and respect the peculiarities of the federating units. Similarly, the component parts in a federation must be made to realize that their values can only be protected from both domestic and external disruptions and obliteration within the framework of the federal state.

Development, like federalism, is not easy to define or conceptualize. It is a highly politicized term. Admittedly, it has come to be the most widely used concept for analyzing the wide chasm between the rich countries of Europe, North America and Japan, and the poverty-stricken countries of Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East. But the numerous works published on the concept have polarized its meaning along ideological divisions of Western-oriented and Marxist writers.

North American and Western European theorists see development as the propensity to accumulate and save capital. To them, it is the marginal out-put ratio that determines growth rate, and among the adherents of this view, high technology is an essential part of the development process. They believe that development should entail industrialization which, either by choice or necessity, must be aimed essentially at capturing the domestic market for manufacturers by substituting for imports.[40] In contrast, Marxist and neo-Marxist writers see development as an

unending improvement in the capacity of the individual and society to control and manipulate both natural and social forces for the benefit of the particular society and humanity in general. To them, there is no development unless there has been set in motion the process of emancipating the population's poor from poverty, disease and ignorance. Furthermore, for increase in the material well-being of the masses to be regarded as development, it must be the result of the efforts of the indigenous population to apply their creative energies to the transformation of the local, physical, biological and socio-cultural environments.[41]

To all intents and purposes therefore, development as a concept, involves man's ability to transform his physical environmental for his own betterment and that of the state to which belongs. Such a process is continuous and involves incremental qualitative changes in man, his society and environment in an interdependent manner. Development, thus, cannot be justifiably equated with simple growth in wealth in terms of out-put, though this forms an important part of the process.

It is very difficult to review works on a topic like the Igbo State Union. This is so because there is a near dearth of literature on ethnic nationalism, especially within the ambit of a pan-ethnic organization. In this particular case, there appears to be no work at all dedicated exclusively to the study of the Igbo State Union. Instead, what one usually comes across is a passing mention of the Union, especially in works on the early years of party politics in Nigeria. At other times, the Union is mentioned in relation to the roles of some less-inclusive town or village unions, which may have been members of this pan-ethnic organization.

Even at that, the few available works on the Igbo State Union have varied impressions of its activities. It is not uncommon to find writers contradicting themselves on the role and activities of the Union. For instance, Smock, while sharing the view that the Igbo State Union facilitated the Igbo desire for partaking in the sharing of Nigeria's scarce resources, also argued that the Union did not advance the cause of Igbo unity.[42] She, however, conceded that the Union did activate the urge for maintaining and sustaining the Igbo identity in Nigeria's urban centres. By this, it means that at least, the educated and commercial elements among urban Igbo residents embraced the Igbo State Union. This, no doubt, could not have failed to imbue in them a sense of unity and oneness, even if minimal.

Perhaps what Smock tried to emphasise was that even after the Igbo State Union had come into existence, there was still a persistence of less-inclusive communal associations. But there is no doubt that the Union's activities were felt all over the major urban centres of Nigeria. After all, ethnic associations were formed by migrants to the urban areas, and the failure of the Union to permeate the rural areas could not have been deliberate. Actually, it was the duty of the more inclusive associations to sensitize the rural folks on happenings in the nation since many of them were affiliated to the larger Igbo State Union.

Moreover, as Kenneth Little illustrates, the Igbo State Union, despite its urban-centred orientation, did succeed in training Igbo abroad, and those beneficiaries were later to play leading roles in Nigerian politics.[43] Chinua Achebe, on the other hand, holds a contrary opinion on the activities of the Igbo State Union. In his words:

> *The Igbo State Union was a paper tiger whose bogey value may have been exploited by a handful of self-appointed leaders in such places as Lagos and Port Harcourt; but among the Igbo elites it was largely a joke and to the Igbo masses it was quite unknown.*[44]

This view may have been informed by accusations that the Igbo used the Union to secure undue advantages over other Nigerians, as Saro-Wiwa, for instance, has argued.[45]

Nevertheless, it appears to be a rather ill-informed statement, as subsequent analysis in this book shall reveal. It is true that the Igbo State Union was not popular in the countryside, but it certainly elicited lasting impact among Igbo residents in the urban areas. That the Union was unknown to many Igbo rural dwellers does not also mean that its activities did not directly or indirectly have positive impacts on their lives, or that the body did not lay foundations from which those rural dwellers or their offspring benefited even after the Union had been proscribed. Certainly, their being unaware of the existence of the Union and the resulting inability to participate in its activities did not stop the Union from speaking for them and protecting their interests, especially at levels which they themselves could not reach. Thus, the Igbo State Union was not "a paper tiger" with a "bogey value", and it is unfair to describe it as such. After all, the Union had an elaborate organizational structure and succeeded in its primary function of ensuring that the Igbo embraced Western education with a near-fanatical zeal.

Other writers like Richard Sklar, have taken time to examine the relationship between the Igbo State Union and the National Council of Nigeria and the

Cameroons, (NCNC).[46] Unlike Smock, Sklar paid scant attention to the cultural roles of the Union during its period of existence. Like J. S. Coleman, he believes that there is a veritable relationship between the formation of the Union and the published diatribes between Igbo and Yoruba leaders in the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Service* newspapers.[47] Coleman, indeed, traces the history of the Igbo State Union to 1935, when, according to him, Akanu Ibiam, the first Igbo medical doctor, came back from Europe. He insists that the event prompted the call for a federation of the existing village and town unions into a pan-Igbo organization aimed at advancing the Igbo, especially in the field of education.[48] To Howard Wolpe, the Igbo State Union, although highly cohesive and organizationally sophisticated, played negative roles in relation to Igbo aspirations. He writes that the Union is blamed for undermining the NCNC's pan-Nigerian aspirations as well as impairing the national legitimacy of the Ironsi administration.[49]

Much as these accusations are understandable (though contestable), it would be unfair to lose sight of the fact that Igbo involvement in the two events were largely inevitable. In the first instance, despite the fact that the NCNC had a national outlook more than any other political organization in Nigeria then, its leadership were basically Igbo. Since most of its leading members were also members of the Igbo State Union, it will be illogical to expect a situation where there would not be a mutuality of interests between the two organizations. Similarly, the charge that the Union served as a primary operative factor in denying the Ironsi regime national legitimacy lacks merit. There is no evidence

whatsoever to show that the Union played any role in the events that led to the emergence of the first military regime in Nigeria. On the contrary, there is ample documented evidence to show that it was the Igbo who sensitized other Nigerians on the need for a united nation in the pre-independence era.[50]

In his own contribution, W. T. Morris pays more attention to the Igbo State Union's cultural roles. According to him, the Union was both a symptom and a cause of a growing Igbo cultural self-consciousness.[51] Thus, whereas in the traditional setting the Igbo man lived as a member of an isolated village largely ignorant of the next village or the existence of a larger cultural group (the Igbo), the Igbo Federal Union (and later the Igbo State Union) awakened him into realizing that he was a member of a larger and more influential group within Nigeria. This was, of course, made possible by the tacit cooperation which the various town and village unions that were affiliated to Igbo State Union gave that Union. In this, he shares the opinion of David Parkin who maintains that like other ethnic associations, the Igbo State Union served a practical moral usefulness to the Igbo.[52]

To achieve the desired objective of this book, the research methodology adopted for the study involved the following:

1. The use of documentary evidence falling into the traditional groups of primary and secondary sources. The former include dailies, periodicals and other published and unpublished materials on the Igbo State Union in the National Archives at Enugu and Ibadan, conference papers from related disciplines as well as newsletters and bulletins.The secondary sources include published books and journal articles that were considered relevant to the topic.

2. Field works that involved meeting with some of the leading members of the Igbo State Union as well as members of other ethnic unions like the Ibibio State Union who were still alive when the research was conducted. Unfortunately, some of these persons were senile, too sick or unwilling to grant interviews.

3. Since by its nature, this research involved content analysis and interpretation as well as oral information, these had to be subjected to systematic and critical analysis.

Apart from the introductory aspect of this book, which has tried to justify the study, define its scope and some concepts, as well as attempted a review of some relevant literature, it has five substantive chapters. The first chapter examines Igboland and its people in pre-colonial times, including the political system, social and cultural practices, and economic activities. Chapter Two analyzies the circumstances that led to the formation of the Igbo Federal Union in 1936 and its later transformation into the Igbo State Union in 1948. Also examined in the chapter is the internal organization and dynamics of the Union, especially in relation to its constitution, membership, structure and functions. In Chapter three, the main focus is on the problems which the Union encountered during its period of existence. Such constraints are examined from those that were internal to the Union to those that were obviously external.

Chapter Four argues that in spite of the constraints it encountered, the Igbo State Union, without doubt, influenced the Igbo, especially those living in the urban areas. However, the impact of the Union was not limited to the Igbo alone, as evidenced, for instance, by the establishment of primary and secondary schools in Kano and Kafanchan by the Union and its affiliate bodies. Chapter Five seeks to examine whether Igbo "clannishness" and ethnic nationalism were really factors in the Nigeria - Biafra war of 1966–1970, as some people have come to believe. It

also takes a look at how Igbo ethnic nationalism has manifested in Nigeria since the end of the war in 1970. This is something of a comparison between Igbo attitudes to national integration between 1936 and 1970 and the situation since 1970.

It has to be stressed at this juncture that this is basically a pioneering work and naturally enough, there are bound to be controversies. But it is hoped that these shall in no way affect the utilitarian value of the book, namely, as a useful addition to the scant literature existing on the Igbo State Union. Moreover, as much as possible, attempts are made to avoid the use of the anglicized word "Ibo". Instead, "Igbo" is used in reference to both the people and the organization under discussion. It is believed that the use of the word "Ibo" was popular during the colonial era for two major reasons. In the first instance, Igbo orthography then did not include "gb", and thus, "b" was used instead. Europeans, especially the British that colonised Nigeria, could not pronounce "Igbo" to reflect the "gb". Ibo was easier for them to pronounce and write. Also, the type -writers did not have "gb" in their character. Hence 'b' became privately and publicly used instead of "gb".

Subsequently, it became normal usage such that even Igbo elites at that time could not oppose the mutilation. As a matter of fact, some of them ended up using "Ibo" rather than the correct name, Igbo. According to B. O. N. Eluwa, Igbo orthography then was such that even the premier "*Azu Ndu*", used "Ibo" instead of "Igbo"[53]. This error enabled those who had been brain-washed by the sneer "Ibo" to be associated with the "Ibo" Union, rather than the "Igbo" State Union. A good example was the Onitsha, who referred to the rest of the Igbo group as "Nwa onye Igbo". They felt more comfortable being associated with the "Ibo" Union, rather than the "Igbo" Union.

Secondly, the word "Igbo" was used derogatorily during the colonial era. This may not have been directly the fault of the British imperialists but the result of the prevailing colonial mentality which created a situation whereby everything indigenous was scorned. In fact, it was not uncommon to see some Igbo anglicizing Igbo words. Many did not want to be called "Onye Igbo"; the right word then was "Iboman." People felt ashamed to be identified as Igbo and changed their names from Okpara to Okparason or Chukwu to Chuks, and so on and so forth.

These factors invariably led to the organization under examination being registered as the "Ibo" State Union under the Land Perpetual Succession Ordinance. The rise to self-assertion by the Igbo group, especially in the urban areas of colonial Nigeria, radically changed this inferiority complex and Igbo people became proud of their common origins and their Igboness. This explains the decision to have "Igbo State Union" instead of "Ibo State Union" as the title of this book.

ENDNOTES

1. The Human Sciences (or the Behavioural Sciences) are those sciences that study human behaviours through scientific means. They include Sociology, Anthropology, (excluding Archaeology, Technical Linguistics and Physical Anthropology), Economics, Geography, Psychology (excluding Physiological Psychology), Psychiatry, and Political Science as well as Law and the behavioural aspect of Biology. See Bernard Berelson, "Behavioural Sciences," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 1 and 2, (1972): 41 – 42.

2. Hughes H. Stuart, "The Historian and the Social Scientist," *American Historical Review,* 06 (1960): 32.

3. Albert J. Reise Jr, "Sociology," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* Vols. 15, 16 and 17 (1972): 1

4. While Richard L. Sklar tried to expose the political nature of the Igbo State Union, Audrey C. Smock is insistent on her claims that although the Igbo State Union exerted considerable influence on the NCNC, it was essentially a cultural organization. See R. L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Lagos: Nok Publishers International, 1983), 460-463, and Audrey C. Smock, *Ibo Politics:The Role of Ethnic Unions in Eastern Nigeria* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 19.

5. See Ken Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain: An account of the Nigerian Civil War,* (Port Harcourt: Saros International Publishers, 1989).

6. See in particular, Chapter XVII of *On a Darkling Plain*. Saro-Wiwa argued that the Igbo used the Igbo State Union to frustrate "the legitimate aspirations of the minorities of the Rivers area..." 177.

7. Works on the Igbo, especially in relation to their political orientations and practices are a legion. See for instance, the following: K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885* (London: OUP, 1956); Daryll Forde and G.I. Jones, *The Igbo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria* (London: OUP, 1950); C.K. Meek, *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*. (London: OUP, 1937); V.C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965); Simon Ottenberg, "Ibo Receptivity to Change" in William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (eds). *Continuity and Change in African Cultures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); G. I. Jones, "Ibo Age Organization" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* XCIL (1962), among others.

8. See Ukpana Okpu, *Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigerian Politics; 1960-1965* (Stockholm: Acta Universitasis Upsaliensis 1977).

9. Uma O. Eleazu, *Federalism and Nation-Building: The Nigerian Experience, 1954–1964,* London: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd, 1977, 99.

10. Eleazu, *Federalism and Nation-building: The Nigerian Experience, 1954 – 1964, (* London: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., 1977), 99. The author argues, for instance, that in Nigeria, the setting appears to make ethnicity so salient in the direction of disintegration rather than integration.

11. These circumstances are elaborately treated in Chapter Two.

12. Paul R. Brass, "Ethnic Groups and Nationalities," in Peter E. Sugar (ed.), *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (California: ABC–Clio Inc., 1980), 1.

13. Brass, "Ethnic Groups," 1.

14. Audrey C. Smock, *Ibo Politics,* 4.

15. Aidan Southall, "From Segmentary Lineage to Ethnic Association – Luo, Luhya, Ibo and others," in Maxwell Owusu (ed.), *Colonialism and Change: Essays Presented to Lucy Mair.* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1975), 203.

16. Stanley Lieberson, "A Social Theory of Race and Ethnic Relations," in Pierre L. van den Berghe (ed.), *Intergroup Relations: Sociological Perspectives* (New York: Basic books Inc., 1972), 39.

17. H.S. Morris, "Ethnic Groups," in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* vols. 5 and 6, (New York: The Free Press, 1968),167.

18. Wendell Bell and Walter E. Freeman (eds.), *Ethnicity and Nation-Building, (*London: Sage Publication, 1974), 10.

19. Arnold Dashefsky, "Resurgence of Ethnicity", in Arnold Dafefsky (ed.), *Ethnic Identity in Society* (Chicago: Rand McNally Publishers, 1976), 3.

20. Maxwell Owusu, "Comparative Politics, History and Political Anthropology" in Maxwell Owusu (ed.), *Colonialism and Change: Essays presented to Lucy Mair* (1975), 55.

21. Abner Cohen (ed.), *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 190.

22. Smock, *Ibo Politics*, 204.

23. Pierre L. van den Berghe (ed.), *Race and Ethnicity in Africa* (Lusaka: East African Publishing House, 1975), xx-xxi.

24. Marc Howard Ross, "Ethnicity as an Enduring Factor in Urban Politics", in Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Intergroup Relations*: Sociological Perspectives, 214.

25. Onigu Otite, "Ethnicity and Class in a Plural Society: Nigeria," in Cora Bagley Marrett and Cheryl Leggon (eds.), *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations* Vol.1 (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press Inc. 1979), 90.

26. Elliot P. Skinner, "Competition within Ethnic Systems in Africa", in Leo. A. Despres (ed.) *Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies* (Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1975), 131.

27. According to Frank A. Salamone and Charles H. Swanson in "Identity and Ethnicity: Ethnic Groups and Interactions in a Multi-ethnic Society," *Ethnic Group,* Vol.2, (1979): 167-8, "Much of the traditional anthropology of ethnic groups has flowed (sic) from the assumption that the genesis and persistence of ethnic group is related to inter-group competition for scarce environmental resources."

28. The concept of ethnocentrism is elaborately treated in Robert A. LeVine and Donald Campbell, *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes and Group Behaviour* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1973).

29. Cora Bagley Marrett and Cheryl Leggon, *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations, vol. 1,* 3.

30. See for instance, Robert A. Stewart, Graham E. Powell, and S. Jane Chetwynd, *Person Perception and Stereotyping* (London: Saxon House Publishers, 1979).

31. Leo Kuper, "The Plural Societies: Perspectives and Problems," in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith, (eds.), *Pluralism in Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 4-5.

32. J.S. Furnivall, who is often regarded as the major exponent of the plural society, stressed the importance of economic factors as sources of cleavage in such a society. See J.S. Furnivall,*Netherlands Indies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 445.

33. Leo Kuper, "Ethnic and Racial Pluralism: Some Aspects of Polarization and Depluralization," in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith, *Pluralism in Africa*, 459-460.

34. Dankwart A. Rustow, "Nation" in *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vols. 11 and 12, (New York, the Free Press, 1972), 7-12.

35. See Jills Holdings, *African Nationalism* (London: Rupert Hart Davis Publishers, 1971), 2.

36. For a sustained discussion of the concept, see Eugene Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalis: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea.* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1976). See also Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1970); Basil Davidson, "Questions about Nationalism," *African Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 302, (January, 1971); and Konstantin Symmons–Symonolewicz, "Nationalist Movements: An attempt at a Comparative Typology" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 7 (1965). Other works on the concept are Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1944); Louis L. Synder (ed.), *The Dynamics of Nationalism: Reading in its Meaning and Development* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964); and Calton J.H. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1948).

37. See the following works on the concept of nation-building: Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (New York: Wiley Publishers 1964); T. A. Imobighe, "Problems of National Integration: The Issue of

Nigerian Citizenship and State Indigenes," *Nigerian Journal of Policy and Strategy,* 2, 1 (June 1989); Dov Ronen, "Alternative Patterns of Integration in African States," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14, 4, (1974); Richard L. Sklar, "Political Science and National Integration: A Radical Approach", *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 55, 1 (1967).

38. Shridath S. Ramphal, "Keynote Address", in A.B. Akinyemi, P.D. Cole, and W. Ofonagoro (eds.), *Readings on Federalism* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1979).

39. Nnamdi Azikiwe, "Essentials for Nigerians Survival". *Foreign Affairs* XLIII, 3 (April 1965). The following works could also be consulted in relation to the concept of federalism: Max Frenkel (ed.), *Partnership in Federalism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1977); Nelson Polsby and Fred Greenstein (eds.), *Governmental Institutions and Processes* (Addison Wesley, 1975); Kenneth C. Wheare, *Federal Government,* 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press); A. W. MacMahon (ed.), *Federalism, Nature and Emergence:* (Garden City: Doubleday Publishers, 1955); William H. Roker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1964), and Ronald L. Watts, *New Federations: Experiments in the Commonwealth* (Oxford: OUP, 1966).

40. Thony Killick, "Trends in Development Economics and their Relevance to Africa". *J.M.A.S.,* 18, 3, (1980): 368. Other theorists who share this view of development include: P.F. Harrod, *Towards Dynamic Economics* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1948); E.D. Domar, *Essays in the Theory of Economic Growth* (New York: OUP, 1957); Evert E. Hagen, *The Economics of Development* (Illinois: Richard D. Irving Inc, 1980 edition).

41. The following belong to the Marxist School of thought on development: Mahbub Ul Haq *The Poverty Curtain: Choices for the Third (World* New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Dudley Seers, "The New Meaning of Development," *International Development Review* XIX 3, (1973); Okwudiba Nnoli (ed.), *Path to Nigerian Development* (Dakar: Codesria Book Series, 1981); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Enugu: Ikenga Publishers, 1982); Paul Streeten, et al, *First Things First* (London: OUP, 1982).

42. Smock, *Ibo Politics,* 208.

43. Kenneth Little, "The Role of Voluntary Associations in West African Urbanization," *American Anthropologist* 59, (1957): 582.

44. Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, 1983), 47.

45. Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain*

46. Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties,* 460-464.

47. James S. Coleman, Nigeria: *Background to Nationalism* (Benin City: Broburg and Wistrom Publishers, 1986), 346-347.

48. Coleman, *Background to Nationalism,* 340.

49. Howards Wolpe, "Port Harcourt: Ibo Politics in Microcosm," *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 7, 3 (1969).

50. See for instance, Ali Mazrui, "Violent Contiguity and the Politics of Retribalization in Africa," *Journal of International Affairs* XXIII, 1, (1969), 100.

51. W.T. Morrill, "Immigrants and Associations: The Ibo in Twentieth Century Calabar," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* V, (1963): 440.

52. David Parkin, *Neigbours and Nationals in an African City Ward,(* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

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CHAPTER ONE

IGBOLAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Geographical Location and Physical Features of Igboland

The part of Nigeria referred to as Igboland lies between latitudes $4^{o}15^{0}$ and $7^{o}5^{0}$ North, and longitudes $6^{o}00$ and $8^{o}30^{0}$ East. The total surface area is approximately 41,000 square kilometres[1]. The River Niger flows through Igboland, and Onitsha is strategically located along this very important river. It flows from a valley in Lokoja to Itobe through a valley which becomes narrow around Onitsha where hills close in to its floodplain[2]. The eastern scarpland is a major physical feature in the north-south of Igboland and is generally referred to as the Udi Plateau. This dips gently towards the west and is about 300 metres above sea land. The Agulu Lake (which is formed by the damming of the upper Idemili River by sand deposites) is an important feature of the scarpland area.[3]

With respect to climatic conditions, Igboland falls within the tropical rainforest. Here, the equatorial maritime air mass (the southwest rain-bearing wind that blows across the Atlantic Ocean) results in heavy rainfalls in most of Igboland, especially between the months of March and November. Rainfalls average over 3,556mm in a year in Igboland.[4] The climate of the area has had enormous impact on the type of vegetation and cultural landscape of Igboland.

Among the natural resources that abound in Igboland are coal, crude oil, iron ore, bitumen and limestone. The Enugu-Udi escarpment is very rich in coal, though its production and exports have in recent times suffered from official neglect. Crude oil is found in several parts of Igboland, including Ohaji, Egbema, Oguta, Orsu, Ngor, Okpala, Oru, Ukwa West, Ukwa East, Aguleri Otu, Ugwunagbor, Ndoki, Uzo-Uwani and

Ndokwa. The Igboland has the greatest share of potientially shale regions in Nigeria covering over 30,000 kilometres of territory[5]. Nkalagu is home to large deposits of limestone, while Enugu has a huge deposit of iron ore which is believed to be in the neighbourhood of between forty-five and forty-nine million tons.

Igboland shares borders with Igalaland and Idomaland in the north, Ogoja in the east, the Ijo in the south, and Edoland (or Benin) in the west.

The People

The Igbo constitute one of the single largest ethnic groups in Africa. In the 1930s, G.T. Basden had observed that:

> *The IBO NATION ranks as one of the largest in the whole of Africa. Its numbers have been estimated as high as four, and never below three millions. These people occupy a very considerable area of the southeastern corner of Nigeria...*[6]

The people were forcefully incorporated into Nigeria by the British, firstly as part of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria after a series of political permutations (including being part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate as from 1891 and the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893), and secondly as part of Nigeria following the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. It is not very necessary here to recount the processes that culminated in the evolution of the Nigerian state. Suffice it to say, however, that the British invaders spent more years trying to conquer and pacify Igboland than they did in Yorubaland and Hausaland.

This, according to I.M. Okonjo, was because the Igbo, unlike the Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani, had no centralized social and political organizations and institutions. Every village considered itself autonomous and cherished its independence. The British, therefore, had to subdue the villages one after the other[7].

Yet, British invasion of Igboland did not quite pacify the people, even with the introduction of the so-called 'warrant chiefs'. Fierce opposition to British conquest, annexation, and administration continued up to the late 1920s. According to A.E. Afigbo, "On this matter the picture of the Igbo which emerges from available records is that of a heroic and determined people".[8] The disturbing experience which the British had in subduing the Igbo created in them the impression that the Igbo were ungovernable. This, to say the least, influenced subsequent British policies towards the people during the colonial era.

At this juncture, it is important to define who an Igbo is. It will be too simplistic to define an Igbo as someone who comes from the area referred to as Igboland and who speaks the Igbo language. Adopting such an approach will also generate two very important questions, namely, who are the speakers of the Igbo language, and secondly, what is the extent of the territory occupied by those who speak the language? Finding an answer to the second question, it has to be pointed out, has its own problems as well. This, according to Sidney Emezue, is because many of the people found within the delimited Igbo cultural area, such as the Ikwere of present-day Rivers State and the Ika and Ndokwa people of present – day Delta State, do not all agree that their languages are Igbo.[9]

It is, therefore, quite difficult to define who an Igbo is. Scholars have attempted to give a recipe for resolving this problem of Igbo identity. In the opinion of Dmitri van den Bersselaar:

> *An Igbo is somebody who considers himself Igbo, and who has a link to the area in Southeast Nigeria known as Igboland, either because he himself was born there, or because his family and ancestors came from there. Being Igbo implies being able to speak one of the dialects spoken in the Igbo area (at least more or less), and being familiar with at least part of the traditional cultural norms from that area. If an individual shows himself both unable to speak Igbo and ignorant about traditional culture, his claim to being Igbo is likely to be rejected.*[10]

This effort at defining who an Igbo is has been criticized on three major grounds. In the first place, it is not reasonable and proper to leave what should ordinarily be a firm and settled issue of an individual's ethnic identity to the person's "thinking"[11]. Naturally, a person's thinking on a matter like this is bound to change from time to time, depending on circumstances. Similarly, such a person's ethnicity is most likely to be fixed. Secondly, there is often confusion as to the boundary between a dialect and a language and by extension to the ethnic group. Thus, if one looks beyond Igboland on this matter, it will be noticed that the people of Badagry in Lagos State speak the Egun dialect of the Yoruba language which is not completely intelligible to some speakers of the mainstream Yoruba language. Yet, the Egun-speakers have not made any conscious effort to distance themselves from mainstream Yoruba affairs. This means that the Yoruba would appear to have managed the problems and

challenges of linguistic pluralism better than the Igbo. A third problem associated with den Bersselaar's definition of an Igbo has to do with his geographical limitation of the Igbo people to southeast Nigeria. Like Emezue has rightly queried:

> *Does this definition concide with the Southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria? If it does, it does some violence to the reality on the ground because it excludes some people who speak the language and who do not contest their being Igbo. We are not sure that such groups as the Umuagbayi, Egbema etc who were taken to Rivers State following the boundary adjustments of the 1970s would like to be excised from the Igbo nation. We note that these groups are not seriously contesting their inclusion in the state they now find themselves because of the feeling (real or illusory) that life would be or is easier in Rivers than in the states of the southeast geo-political zone. If on the other hand he means the area to be synonymous with the geographical south-east and so includes Rivers State, then what does he do with the sizeable Igbo population of Delta State?*[12]

Emezue concludes, and rightly too, that den Bersselaar's criteria for determining who an Igbo is, are faulty and unreliable. He went further to isolate factors which he considers to be responsible for the difficulty of identifying who an Igbo is. These include the inauspicious fortunes of the Igbo in Nigeria since the 1960s (such as the genocide of 1966-1967, the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967-1970, and the frequent religious riots in Northern Nigeria which are often targeted at the Igbo), the negative attitudes and perceptions which other Nigerian ethnic groups have of the Igbo, and the failure of Igbo leaders of the core Igbo states to deal fairly

with the Igbo of Rivers and Delta states.[13] The result is that many Igbo from outside the mainland Igboland are not enthusiastic about being identified as Igbo.

The Igbo Culture Area

M.A. Onwuejeogwu[14] has delimited the Igbo cultural area as being contained within an imaginary line running just outside Agbor, Kwale (Ukwuani), and Ebu in the West Niger area; Ahoada, Port Harcourt and Umuagbayi (in Rivers State); Arochukwu, Azumini et cetera, in Abia State; Afikpo, Ndinioafu, Isiogo (in Ebonyi State); Nzam (in Anambra State), and Enugu Ezike (in Enugu State). It must, however, be stressed that some of the people who live within the Igbo cultural area are not all Igbo. For example, the people of Ntezi in Ebonyi Sate are not Igbo but Orri. They speak a semi-Bantu language that closely resembles the Efik and Ibibio languages spoken in Cross River and Akwa Ibom states respectively. There are also remnants of non-Igbo speaking people in the northern tip of Enugu State, especially around Enugu Ezike.

Indigenes of the Igbo area speak different dialects of the Igbo language, some of which are barely mutually intelligible. However, they do share some common cultural traits and practices Prominent among these is the centrality of the earth deity (Ala, Ana, Ali, or Ani) in their cosmology. In most Igbo communities, the earth deity is the most revered of all. It defines and is also the custodian of all moral laws, and most moral offences such as incest, theft, murder, manslaughter, et cetera, are believed to be directly against and repugnant to this deity. It is for this

reason that any person who is injured by such crimes does not have the right to forgive the offender. Rather, the culprits must be allowed to face the full wrath of the law as prescribed by the deity through its chief priest(s).

There are many ways through which those guilty of offending the earth deity could be penalized. Sometimes, they are made to perform cleansing rites to placate the deity. In pre-colonial times, some of such individuals were either killed or sold into slavery. Justice was the underlying objective of such punishments. In particular, retributive justice was the most frequently encountered and best articulated form of justice in traditional Igbo society.[15]

A reflection of the centrality of the earth deity among the Igbo is the fact that its shrine is always at the major road that leads to the typical Igbo village. The shrine is usually sited on the road linking the village and the market square of the village group. Its chief priest was, in times past, one of the most revered and important personalities in the community. The Igbo society attached a premium importance to the earth deity because traditionally, everyone was a farmer, and since the fertility of the farmland was controlled by the deity, it followed that any offence against it and for which no sacrifices were made to appease the deity, would naturally result in famine. For the Igbo, famine and food shortages were considered a great calamity because the affected community would be exposed to the ridicule of depending on others for its food needs.[16]

Among the Igbo too, there were other cultural traits, including the very high premium placed on yam as the chief crop. The yam was and is

still regarded as the king of all crops, and its cultivation and even consumption were, in the past, governed by very strict rules. For instance, there was the restriction of ownership and certain aspects of its cultivation on men, as well as the prohibition of fighting in yam barns (oba), ban on menstruating women from entering the yam barns, and the prohibition of consumption of yams until after the new yam festival, among others.[17]

Other cultural traits that were common among the Igbo include the practice of circumcision and the four- or eight-day market week. The market days are Eke, Orie, Afor, and Nkwo. It should be noted that these market days do not have universal application in Igboland. Some Igbo communities actually do not have either the Eke, Orie, Afor and Nkwo or the four or eight-day weak. For instance, the Ngbo community in the Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State does not only have different names but also have five market days. Similarly, the Igbeagu people of Ebonyi State have five market days namely, Onovo, Ofekiseke, Nsiavo, Nkwagu, and Asua.[18]

Apart form the market days, there are many other divergences in terms of culture among the Igbo, so much so that there is hardly any cultural practice that can justifiably be said to enjoy universal applicability among them. An example would be the marriage system/family arrangement. Among the Cross River Igbo communities of Abam, Abiriba, Edda, Ihechiowa, Nkporo and Ohafia, the matrilineal system of inheritance and succession prevails, unlike the patilineal system which is the practice in other Igbo communities.[19]

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14. Emezue, "The Igbo people" p. 34

One can define an Igbo, at this juncture, as someone either of whose parent is an Igbo and whose ancestral homeland is located within the geo-cultural area known as Igboland. This area would include the South-East geo-political zone, as well as parts of Rivers, Delta, Cross River, and Akwa Ibom States in the South-South geopolitical zone. Also to be included would be some communities in Kogi and Benue States in the North-Central geo-political zone. What this means is that there are Igbo-speaking communities outside the geographical Igboland. In other words, the Igbo are to found not just within Igboland but also in Edo, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Delta, and Kogi states.

The perceptible diversities and variations in culture notwithstanding, the Igbo people share and have always shared, a common basic culture which, according to Onwuejeogwu, centred around a common language, common institutions, as well as common religious and cosmological beliefs.[20]

Igbo Origins, Migrations, and Settlements

It is a very difficult job trying to historicize the origins of the Igbo. Accounts of their origin range from the ridiculous to the absurd. Part of the explanation for this is the absence of indigenous documentary evidence left behind by the ancestors of the people. Furthermore, Igboland did not have empires and kingdoms of the magnitude of Benin, Kano, or Bornu. Thus, there were no official records of the affairs of any Igbo community by themselves because the people did not have well-established institutions and court officials and other methods for preserving their past.

16. M. A. Onwuejeogwu, "Early Peopling and Cultural diversity of Igboland," in Otomata (ed), A survey of the Igbo Nation, p. 129.00.

What serve as sources of Igbo origins therefore, are speculations and extrapolations by indigenous researchers and European colonial officials. Many of these claims are anchored on cultural evidences of similarities between the Igbo and non-Igbo peoples. Ironically, none of these accounts sees the non-Igbo as an outshoot of the Igbo. On the contrary, they see the Igbo as having branched out from some other groups.

The hypotheses of Igbo origins have been divided into three, namely, the Oriental hypothesis, the Niger/Benue hypothesis, and the Igbo Homeland or Independent Origins hypothesis.[21]

The Oriental Hypothesis

This hypothesis holds that the Igbo are of Middle East origins. In other words, the belief is that they were not directly created by God but rather, were relatives of another group, and had to, overtime, evolve their own separate identity. They are believed to have originated from either Egypt or Israel and to have moved to their present location from there. This hypothesis is based on some real and perceived cultural similarities between the Igbo and the ancient Egyptians and Jews. These include circumcision, system and manner of naming children, sentence structure, and similarity in some words. Others are religious and cultural symbols, love for adventure and enterprise.[22]

While the dual organization of Igbo social structure, the practice of mummification by the Igbo and ancient Egyptians, the practice of the worship of a sun god by both peoples, and the identification of the Igbo Ikenga with the Ram-headed god of the ancient Egyptians have been used

to conclude that the Igbo originated from Egypt, the practice of circumcision, certain similarities in sentence structure and the intensely religious nature of the Igbo have been employed to trace and link the Igbo as one of the 'Lost Tribes of Israel'.[23]

However, this claim of Middle East origin for the Igbo lacks merit, though it has become popular since the mid- 1960s when atrocities against the Igbo by other Nigerians, especially the Hausa-Fulani, compelled them to lead an unsuccessful secessionist bid by the former Eastern region. Yet, there is no denying the fact, as Afigbo[24] has argued, that this Middle Eastern claims is just a localized version of the discredited Hamitic hypothesis which sees every development in sub-Saharan Africa as deriving from outside Africa. Genetically, there is no evidence of any relationship between the Igbo and both the ancient Egyptians and Jews. Indeed, Igbo history and cultural practices have an antiquity that is older those of the ancient Egyptians and Jews[25]. The Igbo could not, therefore, have originated from the Middle East.

The Niger/Benue Confluence Area Hypothesis:

This hypothesis on Igbo origins became popular following the exquisite archaeological findings in the Nok culture area. Among the major exponents of this hypothesis is A.E. Afigbo, who sees the Igbo as a specialized group of cultures and peoples that did not descend directly from God's factory for making human beings but who developed from a

pre-existing ancient pool of cultures and peoples. Therefore, and in line with this position, the Igbo, as a member of the Negroid race, did not originate from anywhere outside Africa. This is because members of this racial group are known to have originated somewhere south of the latitude of Arselar and Khartoum in present-day Sudan.[26]

Linguistically, members of the Negroid race speak languages which fall into the Niger-Congo language family. A sub-family of this language family known as Kwa is where most of the languages in West Africa, including the Ijo, Edo, Yoruba, Idoma, Igala, Nupe and Igbo, fall into. It is believed that the ancestral language of the Kwa sub-family of languages, including the Eastern Kwa to which the Kwa languages in Nigeria belong (that is, the proto-Kwa), originated from around the Niger-Benue confluence area. It was from there that they subsequently dispersed to other parts of West Africa presently occupied by their descendants.

By this account, the Igbo are believed to be one of the descendants of those proto-Kwa speakers who presently occupy Igboland and environs. According to Afigbo, the Igbo did not come into Igboland as Igbo-speakers but as proto-Kwa-speakers who, in the course of time, developed into Igbo-speakers in their present location. To quote Afigbo:

> *... Igbo culture (the language and all the cultural tool kits that distinguish the Igbo from their neighbours) is autochthonous in the area since it originated in situ. In short, the Igbo people as a biological stock are not autochthonous to the area, but Igbo civilization as a cluster of cultural tool kits is autochthonous. Thus the Igbo claim to being*

autochthonous where we find them today is both correct and incorrect.[27]

The use of linguistic evidence in tracing Igbo origins and the antiquity of yam cultivation and its importance in the Igbo culture area as justification for accepting the Niger/Benue confluence hypothesis have been criticized by some scholars of Igbo history. One of them has argued that the linguistic theory lacks circumstantial evidence, while the assertion that yam cultivation could not thrive well in the rain forest (the present Igbo area) but did thrive in the forest-savannah borderlands (the Niger/Benue confluence area) lacks merit because there is evidence that some species of yam thrive in the forest zone.[28]

However, no matter its perceived shortcomings, the Niger/Benue confluence hypothesis is much more credible than the Oriental hypothesis. Since linguistic evidence, oral evidence, archaeological evidence, and documentary evidence are acceptable sources for reconstructing the past, and given the fact that the validity and reliability of these sources of history are often subjected to scientific empiricism, it would not be out of place to say that the hypothesis is relevant and valid in the reconstruction of the Igbo past. Both glotto-chronology and lexico-statistics have established a relationship between the Igbo, Yoruba and Edo languages separated by only a few thousand years.[29]

The Benin/Igala Hypothesis

The fourth hypothesis traces the origin of the Igbo to two non-Igbo areas, namely, Benin and Igala. The Benin claims are popular among the

Igbo communities along the banks of the River Niger as well as the Ndoki, Enugu-Ezike and Ohafia communities. The most detailed of these claims of Igbo origin from neighbouring non-Igbo areas is that of Eze Chima.[30] According to this tradition, which is very popular in places like Onitsha, the Igbo communities in the West Niger area originated either from Benin or Idah, or both. In other words, the claim of Igbo origins from these two pre-colonial empires exist side by side, especially among the riverine Igbo communities.

Eze Chima, the putative founder of the Western Niger Igbo communities and Onitsha, is said to have been a prince of the Benin royal family. He had to leave the comfort of his father's palace to found a settlement following a dispute over succession. It is claimed that it was Eze Chima who introduced the socio-political systems of the Benin Empire peculiar to the Western Niger Igbo areas of today. These include mini-kingdoms and the paraphernalia of royalty which are not characteristically Igbo.

But the Eze Chima tradition has been debunked as unsubstantial. According to Afigbo, the date 1450 A.D. mentioned in this tradition is much too late to be associated with Igbo origins especially when evidence from linguistics and archaeology indicate dates of between 5,000 and 6,000 years age for Igbo origin. That notwithstanding, the political structure of the mini-kingdoms in the areas under review show obvious cultural borrowings from the Benin Empire. It does not in any way diminish their Igboness.

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17. Emezue, "The Igbo people", in Ndimele and Okeke p.30
18. Ijoma, Igbo History and the Battle for Survival, p. 10

The same is largely true of the Igala tradition of Igbo origin. Both Onitsha and communities in the Nsukka area have adopted this tradition. They also exhibit similar cultural practices and political structure. However, the tendency to identify with great empires is as old as history itself. To quote Afigbo:

> *...the tendency for the ruling aristocracies of these mini-states to claim blood relationship with the Oba of Benin and the Atta of Igala is nothing more than a sociological version of the normal tendency for men who see themselves as underdogs to seek to claim relationship with those they see as the top dogs.*[32]

Thus, the claims of origin from Benin and Igala lack merit, though there are discernible cultural similarities between these places and those Igbo communities who make such claims. But such similarities in culture and political structure are at best the result of interactions, since both great empires shared common boundaries with those Igbo communities who now claim ancestry from them.

The Igbo Homeland Hypothesis

Briefly put, the major thesis of this hypothesis is that the Igbo originated from within Igboland. Historians have been inclined to locating the primary areas of Igbo origin and settlement to the Nri-Awka, Orlu-Owerri axis. It was from this Igbo heartland that many Igbo groups

migrated to where they now live. Some of these groups were later to migrate to the western Niger Igbo areas and others southwards to the areas around the Cross River. Many of them have been domiciled in their present locations for a long time, such that they appear to have lost memories of having migrated from elsewhere.

One evidence that is in favour of the Igbo homeland hypothesis is the evidence of early settlement and protracted utilization of the land and soil of the Nri-Awka and Orlu-Owerri heartland areas. There, the natural vegetation has changed from rain forest to derived savannah due to sustained cultivation. Also, the people's oral traditions, idioms and proverbs give credence to the antiquity of the Igbo heartland areas. The people simply do not have any history of having migrated from elsewhere to their present locations.

In the Nsukka area, there is an unmistakable evidence of very long human presence and land exploitation. Unlike in the southern parts of Igboland, the soil in the Northern Igbo area (where Nsukka falls into) is more exhausted, and there are no thick forests there anymore. Whatever remains of huge trees and forests there are to be found in the shrines and sacred groves.[33] There are archaeological evidences from the Nsukka and Afikpo areas which show that human activity in these places date back to hundreds of years. For instance, archaeological findings in the Nsukka area have shown that the pottery excavated there is over 4,500 years old, while radiocarbon dates for stone tools and pottery sherds in the Afikpo area date back to the 15th century B.C. In addition, Thurston Shaw's excavations

at Igbo Ukwu within the Orlu-Awka axis indicate a very high level of social and political organization which predate the 2nd century AD.

The inference to be drawn from this hypothesis is that though it is difficult to point specifically to any particular place as where the Igbo originated, the present state of our knowledge, supported, as it were, by linguistic and archaeological evidences, locates a general area as the earliest place where the people settled; that is, the Nri-Awka and Orlu-Owerri axis.

Igbo Migrations

In dealing with the routes and patterns of migration of the Igbo, attention is not on migration from anywhere outside Africa. Rather, it is on how and why they moved into what is now known as Igboland. Afigbo has identified two major waves of migration. The first wave is the one out of the Niger-Benue confluence area, while the second has to do with the dispersal of the Igbo over contemporary Igboland and even beyond [34].

The migration outside the Niger-Benue confluence area has been attributed to climate change. This occurred between 6,000 to 5,000 years ago, and led to the desertification of the Sahara from its previous savannah and orchard bush into what it is today. The ancestors of the Igbo and those of other pro-Kwa-speaking ancestors of the Kwa, were forced by circumstances occasioned by the desertification, to move further south from the north due to pressures from their more northerly neigbours.[35] Although increase in population and the adventure of finding new

settlements may have played roles in this southward migration, the most important explanations are to be found in the climatic crisis of the period.

This movement was made possible because of favourable landing grounds provided by the three sandstone ridges on the left flank of the River Niger. These were the sandstone ridges that run from Lokoja to Ilorin on the west bank of the River Niger; the sandstone ridge which lies between Onitsha and Nsugbe; and the triangular piece of land between the River Niger and the Anambra River. These ridges and the adjoining lands there were subjected to seasonal flooding during the period of the migration and initial settlement. They, therefore, provided the routes that aided the movement of the proto-Kwa ancestors of the Igbo and other members of the Kwa sub-family in modern southern Nigeria as they moved down, first by the Niger, and later, as they landed in favourable locations.[36]

It would appear that as the climatic changes continued, they determined to a reasonable extent, the continued movement and dispersal of the proto-Kwa ancestors. The people probably moved initially into highland areas which were not subject to flooding and whose vegetation cover was made up mostly of low bushes and grasses and thus relatively easier to clear for both habitation sites and for agricultural purposes. Given this scenario, therefore, it becomes obvious that the Nsukka-Udi-Okigwe cuesta and the Awka-Orlu uplands were the first places of settlement and the centre around which indigenous Igbo culture was synthesized[37]. These areas are, therefore, to be regarded as the heartland of Igbo culture.

Thus, it was from the Igbo heartland that the second wave of migration occurred. It involved movements from this area into other parts

of present-day Igboland. There were two waves of migrations from the heartland areas. The first was from the Nri-Awka axis westwards across the flood plains of the River Niger up to the upland areas from Asaba to Agbor. The second migration was from the Awka-Orlu axis, and it took an eastward pattern to the Isuama and Ohuhu and Ngwa areas. While the first movement formed the Mbama, Mbieri, Ikeduru, Orsu, Ehime, Uboma and Mbaise respectively, the second migratory wave, that of the Ohuhu and Ngwa, led to the establishment of settlements on the flood plains of the Imo River. But the Isuama group remained, for the most part, on the right bank of that river.

With time, the two waves of migration from the heartland area tried to expand further but were countered by pressures from other groups. For instance, the westward migration across Asaba and other upland areas along the Niger, was checkmated by the Benin empire which was then expanding eastwards in about the 15th century. The Edo counter-pressure led to the founding of Igbo settlements in present-day Ndokwa area and the retreat of the Umu Ezechima group of communities which had tried to expand towards Benin. This recoiling of the Umu Ezechima group ultimately resulted in the founding of settlements around the eastern frontiers of Agbor and Onitsha on the east bank of the River Niger.

Similarly, Igbo expansion through the eastern flank of present-day Nigeria met with resistance and pressures from non-Igbo groups. Thus, the Annang-Ibibio group were able to block the eastward route of the expanding Ohuhu and Ngwa groups. They were forced to recoil and move northwards instead to found the Igbo communities classified today as the

Cross River Igbo (made up of the Abiriba, Abam, Afikpo, Arochukwu Edda, Ihechiowa, Nkporo, Ohafia, and Ututu), and the North-Eastern Igbo (made up mainly of the Izzi, Ezza, and Ikwo communities).

It is to be noted that these migrations from the heartland area and the failure of the Igbo to expand further outside Igboland due to pressures from non-Igbo groups like the Edo and the Ibibio-Annang, occurred relatively late in the evolution of Igbo culture. That is why the Igbo communities involved can still recount their histories. This is unlike the movement outside the Niger-Benue confluence area which has no living history among the Igbo. In other words, the Igbo hardly remember anything about this primary wave of migration in their oral traditions. But many Igbo oral traditions still remember their secondary wave of migration and settlement within present-day Igboland. In a similar vein, the tertiary migration and settlement of the Igbo within Igboland, namely their occupation of the western Niger areas and the areas west of the Cross River, still form part of the oral traditions of the communities there.

One thing worthy of note here is that there were a number of movements within Igboland. Populations continued to move across the Niger and back to the Igbo heartland areas. The people of Ihechiowa, for instance, have an oral tradition which traces their ancestry to the Ukwuani and Ndokwa area. Although the present state of their historical knowledge cannot validate this claim, there are discernible dialectical similarities between the Ihechiowa dialect of the Igbo language and that of the Ndokwa. For instance, the Ihechiowa dialect for a woman is "nwa onyinye", and "nwune" is for a sibling. The Ndokwa dialect shares this

similarity with that of the Ihechiowa. Yet, the Ihechiowa are found in the Cross River Igbo area sandwiched between Efik and Annang neighbours, while the Ndokwa are hundreds of kilometers away in the west of the River Niger. The dialectical similarities between the two communities cannot, however, be dismissed with a wave of the hard. Rather, they serve to elucidate the fact that there were other minor internal movements within present-day Igboland. [38]

Pre-Colonial Igbo Economy

In order of importance and intensity, the economy of pre-colonial Igboland revolved around agriculture, trade, and crafts and manufacturing.

Agriculture:

The most important economic activity of pre-colonial Igboland was agriculture. The importance attached to it was such that virtually every individual was engaged in agriculture either on a part-time basis or full-time. According to V.C. Uchendu, "... the Igbo see farming as their chief occupation and trading as subsidiary not a substitute for it".[39] To a large extent, the fertility or otherwise of the soil determined whether families in the communities produced just enough staples to meet their food needs or whether they had surpluses to supply to outside markets.

It has even been argued that agricultural production in pre-colonial Igboland was responsible for the high population density of the area. Because they had more food than their neighbours, the Igbo are said to have greatly increased in their numbers. With time, they were able to

expand into the territories of their neigbours, especially in the forest areas. Among those they were able to overwhelm were the Ijo and the Ibibio, who are said to have preceded them in occupying the forests.[40]

Every able-bodied individual was actively involved in agriculture. Because every family had to work and produce most of what it needed, the Igbo inevitably developed a penchant for large families. Each successful farmer thus, had to marry many wives to enable him have many children to help out in the farms. It was also common for such wealthy farmers to have many slaves engaged to work in their farms. Also, the wealthy farmer could supplement his labour supply through clientage, a situation whereby some individuals who took loans of food items (especially yams) were required to work in his farms for specific days as a means of repayment.

The importance attached to agriculture in pre-colonial Igbo society was such that land (without which agriculture would not have been important) became a generative principle of the Igbo universe. It was, and still is, associated with important cults and rituals. Land, for instance, was the mother earth (aja ali) who granted fertility and provided the moral sanctions that guided not only agricultural activities but also interpersonal and group relations. Offences like cold-blooded murder and other forms of spilling human blood on the earth were generally abhorred. They were regarded as an up-setting of the order and harmony of things, and required sacrifices to propitiate the gods and ancestors for such offences.

Land ownership in pre-colonial times was essentially of two types: communal and individual. A piece of land owned by an individual could be sold by the owner to another person. In the words of S.N. Nwabara:

> *The sale of land in return for money was one of the many ways of ensuring permanent transfer of title from one person to another, but the idea of losing title or ownership of land to some other person – a concept not unidentical with sale – by one means or another is an age-old tradition in Iboland.*[41]

Communal land ownership, on the other hand, involved a situation where a group had migrated to an entirely new site and occupied a reasonable tract of land which could subsequently be communally-owned. If the village so founded comprised four sub-units, each received a designated area of land which it would then re-divide among its mature adult members. The portion of land so acquired became inalienable and was known as "Ala Ulo" (household land), usually situated within the enclosure of the village. Such land was held in perpetuity by the recipient and could only be given to other members of the family (Umunna) and not to strangers.[42]

Land could be "lost" if it was sold or pledged to a stranger (someone from outside the village or family). But it was not considered to have been "lost" when it was transferred by pledge or sold to a brother or other close relations. At other times, title could be acquired and land transferred. One of these was seasonal transfer which limited the tenant to one farming season. An important prerequisite for this type of temporary transfer was that no permanent crops should be planted on the land, and that such cash crops as oil palm fruits should not be harvested by the tenant (or leasee). The landlord, in addition, received a nominal sum as rent, and this arrangement did not involve other members of the leasee's family. In addition, land could be pledged (Igba ibe) for an unlimited period. But it

was recoverable by the rentor and his successor within three generations. Put differently, under this arrangement, title to a land that was pledged could be inherited or transferred, but the pledger's descendants would lose such title to those of the pledgee after three generations, and that loss of title was permanent.[43]

The high regard for agriculture in pre-colonial Igbo society had some important and far-reaching consequences. Among other things, land became the most highly valued asset both at the individual and community levels. Since agriculture was the major economic activity and since land was the basis for it, individuals and communities were under a moral obligation to defend their land from encroachment and expropriation. According to Emezue, struggles over land account for the bulk of the wars fought in pre-1900 Igboland.[44] Similarly, the high premium which was placed on agriculture in pre-colonial Igbland made it imperative that a man's wealth be assessed in terms of his agricultural output.

Although the Igbo farmer cultivated a variety of crops, none was as important, valuable and prestigious as the yam. It was regarded as the male of all food crops, and a man's wealth (measured in terms of the size of his yam barns), was a determinant factor in his being conferred with the highest and most prestigious tittles, such as the "Nze-na-ozo". Other titles were specially conferred on men who had achieved commendable successes in the cultivation of yams. A good example was the "Ezeji" title.

Like agriculture itself, the cultivation, harvesting, and consumption of yams were ritualized. Just as the commencement of the farming season and the period of harvesting were marked with festivals and rituals, so it

was with the yam. There were laid-down customary rules for cultivating, harvesting, cooking, and eating the yam. In the words of Afigbo:

> *The yam was the king of Igbo crops. Its spirit-force (Njoku or Ihiejioku), was very powerful, widely feared and venerated. It was reputed to strike, with either diarrhea or swollen stomach (afo otuto) those who broke the rules for handling yam. Its more serious taboos forbade people fighting or defecating in yam farms, yams being cooked in the same pot and at the same time with cassava which, being an inferior crop, would pollute Njoku. Also, once yam had been planted, Njoku would forbid anybody cracking palm nuts at night.*[45]

It should be noted that yam is believed to be an indigenous crop of the forest zone of West Africa. Igboland belongs to this zone, and it can be safely assumed that some species of yam are indigenous to Igboland. This is exemplified in accounts of Nri origins as recorded by M.D.W. Jeffreys. According to that tradition, the people of Nri at Aguleri had, following the death of their father, Eri, complained to God (Chukwu) that they had no food to eat. Consequent upon this, Chukwu ordered Nri to kill and sacrifice his eldest son and daughter. After they were killed and offered as sacrifices, Nri's eldest son and daughter were buried in separate graves. Shoots or tendrils appeared out of the graves after three native weeks, and from the grave of his son, Nri dug up a yam. That is why the yam is regarded as the son of Nri and the cocoyam which came out from the grave of the daughter, is regarded as the daughter.[46]

Cocoyam, alongside crops such as maize, breadfruit, and banana were also cultivated by the Igbo. But neither cocoyam nor cassava or

maize was as highly regarded as yam. They did not attract any special recognition by way of titles, rituals, or festivities. Cocoyam and cassava were cultivated exclusively by women and they did not then constitute a staple food. The same was true of maize and banana, though cassava is today an important staple food for the Igbo and other Nigerians.

Pre-colonial Igbo families had two types of farm, namely the homestead farm and the distant farm. The homestead farm approximates to a garden today because it was located quite close to the living area. Some species of yams as well as cocoyams, vegetables, maize, and pepper were grown in such a farm. Women were the ones who owned such farms, and it helped them to readily harvest food crops to meet urgent family food needs. The distant farms were located far away from the village. Farmers had to trek several miles to and fro such farms. Yams and oil palm trees were grown and planted there. Firewood for cooking was also obtained from such farms.

Similarly, some Igbo groups adopted two types of habitation to enable them keep up with the demands of agricultural activities. Thus, there were the traditional homesteads (uno) and the farmsteads (agu). In the farmsteads (agu), virile and active youngmen would relocate to farm-lands that were several miles away from the homestead to work and raise families. When occasions demanded, such as during important festivals in the homesteads, they would visit. But they usually retired at old age to live in the traditional homesteads. According to Emezue[47], this type of arrangement was most pronounced in the Nsukka area of Enugu State

where one can still find a community bearing two infixes, as such Imilike Uno and Imilike Agu, Ezimo Uno and Ezimo Agu.

The general agricultural practices included (and still include), rotational bush fallowing and mixed or intercropping. The duration of bush fallow reflected the pressure of population on land. In pre-colonial times, it fluctuated between ten and fifteen years or even more because many farmers grew crops mainly for subsistence and a little surplus for sale to meet other commitments. It was on the strength of this that A.G. Hopkins argued that the longer the period of fallow, the more fully the land built up its fertility, provided, of course, that there were no other forces acting against it, such as erosion.[48]

Crafts and Manufacturing

Farming was augmented with other economic activities like the making of baskets, mats and even the weaving of cloths and household necessities. Some of these were sometimes sold or exchanged for other needs. Crafts like wood-carving, pottery, cloth-weaving, blacksmitting, salt manufacturing and basket weaving were mainly family concerns. In other words, only members of such families could learn, practice, and teach their young ones these occupations. Others were produced by identifiable communities, though no part of pre-colonial Igboland was found wanting by way of having experts and specialists in any given craft.

Three Igbo communities, namely Awka, Nkwere, and Abiriba, were famous in blacksmitting. Blacksmiths from Awka ventured to as far as the West Niger area. Indeed, blacksmiths from Awka and Nkwere covered

more areas geographically than those from Abiriba. A major explanation for this is the location of Abiriba to the southeast of Igboland, unlike Awka and Nkwere which are located strategically to the centre of Igboland. The fact remains, however, that blacksmiths from these three communities were very important agents of development in pre-colonial Igboland.

Their importance lay in the fact that the introduction of iron equipment resulted in the production of more foods and the conquest of the environment, especially in the cultivation of land[49]. With more food, the quality of life witnessed a boost, and the emergence of specialists in other economic activities inevitable meant a more buoyant economy. Pre-colonial Igboland, therefore, had a diversified economy, though agriculture was the major occupation of most people. The introduction of iron implements had an unprecedented impact not only on agricultural production but also on fishing, hunting, carving, weaving and other craft-related activities. Indeed, it transformed the society.

But it is not exactly known when iron-working first appeared in Igboland. While Afigbo thinks that the knowledge of iron-working in Igboland cannot be isolated from the original home of the Igbo at Nri[50], Onwuka Njoku[51] and Ifeanyi Anagbogu[52] have, respectively, traced the origins of iron-working in Igboland to Agbaja-Udi and Awka. Their divergent views, of course, converge in the fact that both Agbaja-Udi and Awka are within the Nri-Awka-Orlu axis which remains the original home of the Igbo. Therefore, whether it was Awka or Agbaja-Udi that first worked in iron is immaterial. What is important is that with time, Igbo blacksmiths began to traverse the length and breadth not only of Igboland but also the

ensure that each guild (usually made up of men in their prime) went on a three-year business tour of a specific zone assigned to it. Secondly, the guild system was to ensure that there were always enough young able-bodied men to defend the community in times of war and in the absence of the members of the guild that had travelled.[57]

Another important manufacturing activity in pre-colonial Igbo and travelled was the salt industry. This was limited to the northeastern and eastern areas of Igboland (present-day Ebonyi State), especially Uburu and Okposi (in Ohaozara), and Abakaliki. These areas had (and still have) many brine lakes obtained from where the raw material for salt product was obtained. It has been observed that the brine lakes were associated with a local god and many taboos. For instance, only women who had reached menopause could fetch the brine, and had to do so stark naked. In addition, only indigenes were allowed to participate in salt production in these localities[58].

Other craft activities which the Igbo people engaged in were, wood works, clay works (or pottery), and cane works[59]. In wood works, the people carved both ornamental and religious objects, including masks and wooden drums. Also, domestic objects, such as pestles and mortars, as well as wooden utensils and chairs, were artistically carved by the workers. The general belief then was that carving was a natural gift that ran in families. But the natural carver still had to undergo a period of apprenticeship under a master carver before he could perfect his art. The people of Umudioka were famed master carvers, especially of ritual objects

53. Emezie, "The Igbo people", in Ndimele and Okeke, The Igbo people, p. 43
54. Afigbo, Ropes of Sand, p. 141

neighbouring non-Igbo areas. For instance, while Abiriba blacksmiths ventured to as far as the Cross River area, those from Nkwerre were to be found in Ogoniland, and those from Agbaja-Udi itinerated to most parts of northern Igboland and beyond up to present-day Delta State.[53]

Anagbogu has listed the implements produced by Igbo blacksmiths to include needles, armlets, swords, spears, regal, pastoral and honoristic staff, hoes, matchets, axes, and dane guns. It is his opinion too that given their itinerant nature, these blacksmiths, more often than not, manufactured whatever implements their hosts required and demanded[54]. Until the British conquest of Igboland, the blacksmiths from Igboland were able to satisfy the needs of both the Igbo and non-Igbo communities where they plied their trade. They were highly respected because of their artistic competence.

Awka blacksmiths were the most highly recognized and enjoyed freedom of movement wherever they went. Blacksmithing, according to Afigbo, was not only a particularly difficult profession which required both artistic ingenuity and physical strength, but was also regarded as a mystical profession which connected the blacksmith to the spirit world[55]. In all, blacksmiths formed guilds, though it has been observed that this was common among Awka blacksmiths vis-à-vis those from Nkwerre and Abiriba. While the latter groups travelled as individuals, Awka blacksmiths organized themselves in such a way that half of their members travelled outside in a year, while the others stayed back to guard the home and to travel out afterwards.[56] According to Emezue, the formation of guilds by Awka blacksmiths served two main purposes. Firstly, the idea was to

and insignia.[60] Carvers, like blacksmiths, were highly respected for their ingenuity, though they did not cover as many areas as did blacksmiths.

Pottery-making was based on the availability of the right type of clay, and Igbo communities such as Ishiagu, were noted for their pottery products. They produced a variety of pots both for cooking purposes as well as for water storage. Furthermore, some communities within the Owerri and Mbaise areas are believed to have produced artistic and exquisite clay works which symbolized the great social events and their patrons. These are today depicted in the 'Mbari' museums in the Owerri and Mbaise areas.[61]

Pre-colonial Igboland also engaged in the weaving of cotton clothes. This was mostly done by women. Prior to their contact with cotton, the Igbo made clothes from the fibrous bark of certain trees, the most popular of which was "Aji". Because of its arduous method of production, this type of weaving was restricted to men. But as Afigbo has observed, women began to dominate the profession following the introduction of cotton[62.] In Akwete and the western Igbo areas, the weaving industry had reached a high level of sophistication long before the colonization of Nigeria. Till date, hand-woven cloths are highly valued in Igboland because of their quality and durability.

Trade and Marketing

There is a link between agriculture, manufacturing and trade. Without trade, there would be a tendency to self- sufficiency, and with

trade, goods and services are transported or moved from areas of abundance to those of scarcity. This was the case in both the Igbo communities that were contiguous and in those that were far apart. Trade was thus a very prominent aspect of the economic activities of pre-colonial Igboland. During the period under review, trade could be classified into two broad categories, namely, the short-distance trade, and the long-distance trade. While people and communities that lived in very close proximity were connected through short-distance trade, long-distance trade connected people and communities who were not living very close to each other. The long-distance type of trade had two dimensions. One was regional; that is, it connected communities within Igboland who were not living in close proximity. The second was the one that connected the Igbo people with their non-Igbo neighbours. By obvious implication, this type of trade involved mostly frontier Igbo communities, though professional long-distance traders from other parts of Igboland and beyond were also active participants.

It is not exactly clear when markets originated in pre-colonial Igboland. What is not in doubt is that trading activities and markets in the area are ancient[63]. Similarly, it is not easy to define what a short-distance trade is. What one can say is that it was the trade that was conducted within a marketing radius and which enabled the trader to go and come Back to his/her home the same day. It did not involve any stop-over. A major determinant of this kind of trade was the means of transportation. More often than not, head porterage was the commonest means. Furthermore, a number of features characterized short-distance trade.

Among these was the fact that it was dominated by the female folk, and these were mostly non-professionals. In addition, the number of traders involved was quite substantial, while the commodities traded were predominantly agricultural. Finally, but no less important, was the fact that the media of exchange varied, involving, as the case may be, the barter system, as well as the use of monetary medium of exchange, including currencies like manila, iron-bars, and cowries.

An important distinguishing feature of the short-distance or domestic trade was that the markets were generally periodic, and this varied from one community to the other. But the four-day and eight- day market circles were the most predominant. There was a tendency for contiguous villages to form themselves into a market ring which was arranged in such a way as to avoid conflict within the ring. The guiding principle in the arrangement derived from the theory that proximity in space implies some form of separation in time. The idea, therefore, was to maximize the purchasing power of the people within that market ring.

The market-place was more than a place for trading activities. In other words, it served a variety of other purposes. For instance, important festivals, especially those that were historically related to the survival and well-being of the group of villages within a particular market ring, were celebrated in the market square. Also, the market squares served as venues for the display of cultural dances and games, and provided opportunities for social interactions between in-laws, friends and relations on market days.[64] Because of its important place in the economic ad social well-being of the people, market places in pre-colonial Igboland were

highly respected. Each community strove to ensure that the reputation of its market was not in any way tainted either through misdemeanour or through the use of sharp or other unwholesome methods and practices in the exchange of goods. For this reason, the women, who in most cases were in-charge of the market, had a market council that mediated and adjudicated in cases of disagreements or the violation of market rules and regulations, while male age grades were often detailed to ensure law and order and to prevent people from becoming a nuisance in the market-place.

In order to ensure the sanctity of the market-place, some stringent measures were adopted by villages that hosted the markets. Thus, it was not uncommon for such villages to adopt a deity to oversee the activities of the market and to punish those who went contrary to the market's traditions with diseases and even death. There was a body specifically assigned the duty of ensuring cleanliness and the maintenance of order in the market on the days it held. Youths and age grades were usually charged with these responsibilities.

Long-distance trade was an adjunct of domestic trade and marketing. The major markets which were connected with long-distance trade have to be seen as an apex of a host of smaller markets scattered all over Igboland

and beyond in the period before contact with the British. Loosely, it could be said that long-distance trade was a means of making up for the deficiencies of short-distance trade. It also has to be noted that unlike short-distance or domestic trade which involved mostly agricultural

products, long-distance trade generally involved manufactured goods and necessities such as salt, metal wares and clothing.

As mentioned earlier, there were two the categories of long-distance trade. The first was within Igboland, and the second was between the Igbo and their non-Igbo neighbours. The trade within the Igbo region was the outcome of gradual differentiation in the ecological conditions of different parts of Igboland. According to Afigbo, the differences in ecology resulted in a situation where different goods were produced or manufactured in particular localities, and surpluses had to be exchanged for those goods which such localities could not produce but needed.[65] In other words, excess goods from one village could be exchanged for those goods which that village needed but could not produce because of ecology.

This was the case in long-distance trading activities between Northern Igboland which was the area first settled by the Igbo and (whose vegetation and soil had become of poor quality incapable of sustaining the food needs of an increasing population) and other parts of Igboland, especially the surrounding Igbo communities which were newly settled and had fertile land. Because of the worsening environmental conditions in their communities, individuals and groups from Northern Igboland increasingly abandoned agriculture and embraced such other professions as trading, manufacturing, divination, and ritualists.[66]

It was through this way that long-distance traders and manufacturers and other specialists came to depend on their neighbours for their agricultural and food needs. This type of relationships, that is, long-range trade relationships, also involved the Igbo and their non-Igbo neighbours.

For instance, among such Cross River Igbo communities as Arochukwu, Ihechiowa, and Ututu, commercial and cultural relationships with their Efik and Annang/Ibibio neighbours predated British colonial rule.[67] Similarly, Igbo communities further south engaged in commercial transactions with their Ijo neighbours from who they obtained salt and fish in exchange for agricultural products. In Northern Igboland, contacts with the Igala were also mutually beneficial to these neighbours. For instance, the Igbo exchanged slaves and ivory for horses, bronze items, and glass beads from Igala-land

In the words of Afigbo:

> *By about the ninth century, the trading system of Igboland was such that one can firmly assume that both regional trades linking the different parts of Igboland and long-range trade linking Igboland and the region further north (the Sudan and beyond) were already long established.*[68]

Some Igbo individuals and groups became professional long-distance traders, and some communities equally became famous for hosting long-distance markets. For instance, long before the coming of Europeans, the Aro, Nri, Awka, Nkwerre, Abiriba, Aboh, and Umunneoha, had produced itinerant professional traders. However, some of them, especially the Aro and Umunneoha, were also agents of oracles like the Ibini Ukpabi and Amadioha respectively, while those from Abiriba, Nkwerre and Awka combined trading with blacksmithing. In a similar manner, long-distance traders from Nri were medical and ritual experts. Among communities that became famous because they hosted long-distance markets were Bende, Aboh, Uzuakoli, Onitsha, Otuocha, Nike, and Ogurugu.[69]

Long-distance trade was definitely the preserve of men. This was partly because of the risks involved, and partly because the traders who engaged in it had to keep away from home for months. Also, there was often insecurity along the routes, a problem which was by no means easy to solve. To find an answer to this problem, the traders devised a number of means, including travelling in convoys or caravans, using armed escorts and spies, as well as diplomatic or commercial marriages. They also got initiated into secret societies and such other social formations not only in the communities where the markets held, but also in those communities through which their trading routes passed. At other times, the traders exploited religious brotherhoods to avoid being the targets of criminals along the trade routes.

Trading impacted a lot on pre-colonial Igboland. While long-distance trade affected the culture of the people through the introduction of new foods and dressings, short-distance trade facilitated the exchange of local goods and encouraged relationships between Igbo communities and individuals. Also, long-distance traders, especially the Aro, were instrumental to the founding of many settlements in various parts of Igboland and beyond. These started basically as refreshment centres but later became large communities. It is also to be noted that long-distance trade led to the emergence of an economic elite who were engaged in that type of trade. By the turn of the twentieth century, many of these had become very visible in the political activities in their localities. As Emezue has rightly observed, their political profiles were such that the British appointed some of them as warrant Chiefs.[70] This was partly on account of

the dominant roles they had come to play as community leaders prior to colonial rule.

Politics, Society, and Culture in Pre-colonial Igboland.

Prior to British colonial rule, the Igbo did not come under any single political authority. On the contrary, pre-colonial Igboland was largely fragmented politically, and each part had it own political system, though there were no marked differences. In other words, there were a number of common features, both in the political institutions and in the attitudes of the people towards them. Thus, most Igbo communities had similar political orientations and institutions.

Ogbu U. Kalu has identified four basic types of Igbo political system. These are:

a. Those with a monarchical state system (Onitsha, Oguta, Nri, Ossomari and Arochukwu). Here, the king had a graded cabinet and often used a secrete society as an executive arm. Titled people (ozo) were not automatically advisers to the king.

b. Those in which the village chiefs ruled with titled people (nze or ozo/ichie) as advisers, often consulting the people and the women (umuada) and using some secret societies as enforcement agencies.

c. Those in which the village chiefs ruled with representatives of family heads and members of a key secret society.

d. Those in which the village chiefs ruled with representatives of the autochthonous families and with the oldest age grade. The next two

age grades acted as the executive arm while the populace and women shared in decision-making.[71]

On his part, Afigbo[72] also identified four types of political system among the pre-colonial Igbo. The first is what he called the presidential monarchy. It was practised in Igbo communities bordering the Bini and the Igala. In these Igbo communities, some of the political trappings and paraphernalia, as well as ceremonials of these non-Igbo groups were readily borrowed and integrated into the local political systems of Igbo communities who lived in close proximity to them. However, in as much as such "monarchs" kept courts and displayed other non-Igbo political orientations, they were in actual fact merely the spokesmen or presidents of their councils of elders (ama-ala) and village-group assemblies.

The second is what he referred to as the "village republic". This, he has argued, was the commonest form of the political systems, and was found mostly among the peripheral and riverine Igbo. It was the original political system in these areas before it was influenced by the political cultures of the Bini and Igala. The distribution of power and authority in this second type of political system, as well as the practices and processes of government were basically the same as what obtained in the presidential system. But there was a noticeable absence of the title, regalia, and ceremonials of royalty.

A third type of pre-colonial system is the type found among the North-Eastern or Cross River Igbo, such as the Abakaliki and Afikpo Divisions of colonial Nigeria. Their contacts with non-Igbo groups of the

Cross River area led to the borrowing of their highly developed age-sets system. The result was the evolution of a political system where the requirements and demands of government were adequately satisfied by a combination of the kinship and age-set systems.

The fourth type of political system, according to Afigbo, is the one where the domination or lack of it of government by the kinship system is the major criteria. Here, one finds many other types of Igbo political systems. For instance, among the Igbo of Okigwe, Orlu, and Owerri Divisions of colonial Nigeria (that is, the Central Igbo), the kinship system had an overwhelming influence on the government in pre-colonial times. Institutions and agencies like title and secret societies, as well as age-grades, did not necessarily confer political leadership on any individual, though they did confer some kind of social status and respect on members. What obtained in these areas, according to Afigbo, represented the real indigenous political system of the Igbo. The reason he has given is the fact that since these areas are located in the centre of Igboland, they were not exposed to alien cultures and were, therefore, better positioned to preserve authentic and pure Igbo ideas and institutions of government.[73]

In all, most pre-colonial Igbo communities generally had the village group as the largest political unit. Each village group was usually a collection of villages with a common history and myth of origin from a common ancestor. The villages were ranked in order of seniority which did not necessarily affect the population size and territorial spread of the villages so ranked. Each member-village comprised lineages which were believed to have descended from the sons of the founder of the village.

The lineages in the village were also ranked according to seniority. Below these were the sub-lineage or compound (or extended family) which was made up of households whose heads were usually brothers. At the level of the household, 'government' was strictly a family affair involving the husband and his wife (or wives).

It was at the sub-lineage or extended family level that the rudiments of an elementary form of government could be discerned or isolated. Here, the oldest man was considered the head of the family. It was he that took custody of the family's ancestral symbols, such as the 'ofo' (the Igbo symbol of authority, right conduct, justices, and continuing union between the dead and the living).[74] He presided over meetings where decisions reached were enforced by informal sanctions, and he was highly respected.

At the lineage level, other institutions of control were found. These included age-groups and secret societies which acted as the police force in controlling its members and enforcing the decisions of the village assembly. Next was the assembly which, unlike the lineage assembly, was made up of the adult members. However, it had an inner council of lineage heads known as 'Ndi Ama-ala', or 'Ndi isi Ofo'. All adult males took part in the deliberations, though the 'Ama-ala' usually had to withdraw to consult (Igba izu) before presenting their views to the general assembly for approval or rejection. It was at this level that direct democracy ended.

At the level of the village group, member-villages sent representatives to the assembly which was the supreme authority of the group. Usually, the representatives were the 'ofo'-holders or leading members of the title and secret societies. Decisions were reached by

consensus, and these were enforced by the age-grades and secret societies, such as 'Ekpe', 'Obon', 'Ekan', and 'Okonko', especially among communities like Ihechiowa, Arochukwu, Ututu, Ohafia, Abiriba, Edda, Nkporo and Abam (the Cross River Igbo). To quote Afigbo:

> *Each village was virtually autonomous and could not be made to accept decisions it did not agree on or in which it took no part. The village council or assembly had no executive agents of its own, nor could an age-grade or secret society from one village go to another to enforce the decisions of the village-group assembly.*[75]

The observation of G.I. Jones when he submitted his "Report on the Position, Status, and Influence of Chiefs and Natural Rulers in the Eastern Region of Nigeria" to the colonial government is in tandem with what Afigbo said.

According to that Report:

> *The traditional government of communities in the Eastern Region depended on the general will of the component segments of the groups as expressed through their representatives at a general meeting of the tribe. This does not mean that communities in the Eastern Region have no chiefs... It means that the functions they were required to perform differed. Every local community has some person or persons whom they refer to by a term signifying head or chief.*[76]

Thus, while there is no denying the fact that the pattern of political organization in pre-colonial Igboland exhibited variations in much the same way that the Igbo language has several dialects that are mutually intelligible, there was a common thread running through all of them,

namely consultation and consensus.[77] There was nothing like an oligarchy, Rather, government was republican; that is, it was the concern of everyone.

Pre-colonial Igboland also had a variety of judicial processes which differed from one locality to the other. In some parts, the first son of the extended patrilineal family held the 'Ofo' and offered sacrifices to ancestral deities. He also mediated in cases involving members of the household. In more serious and complicated cases, especially those that threatened to tear the family apart or bring it to disrepute, the oldest son ('Okpara', 'Okwara', 'Okpala' or 'Opara') would summon members of the family 'Umunna'). This was in recognition of the fact that the first son realized that his authority derived from the 'Umunna'.[78]

But in cases involving members of two different villages, the councils of these villages had to intervene to resolve the contentious issues amicably. Similarly, in cases involving the desecration of the land ('Ala', 'Ali', 'Ana', or 'Ani'), the priest of the earth deity, ('Eze Ala') mediated. As a matter of fact, he was quite powerful because in Igbo religious belief, the earth claimed every person upon the his/her death.[79] Both the defendant and the plaintiff in matters involving the desecration of the land were usually required to swear before the earth deity, declaring that should they tell lies, the deity should strike them dead. Witnesses were similarly made to swear that they would give correct and honest evidence.

Writing on oath-taking among the Igbo, Udobata Onwunwa has observed that:

> *In Igboland, oath-taking is known as Idu-isi or inu-iyi, implying the physical actions one performs*

> *when carrying out the ritual. This external action is what an observer sees but the deity sees both the external and internal dynamics of the oath. In idu-sis (sic) or idu-ishi, a person literally nods his head in the name of the god that he accepts the stipulations of an oath or that what he is saying is the truth. On the other hand, Inu-iyi implies 'drinking the 'iyi' (water). The idea of 'drinking' presupposes the use of water or wine which one sips as a practical enactment of the oath. Often the gods in whose names the oath is sworn, have springs [iyi] from which the one taking the oath drinks to declare his innocence.* [80]

Oath-taking in Ihechiowa is called 'Ita Arunsi', and is different from 'Igba-ndu' or blood covenant. Although 'Igba-ndu' involves oath-taking, it is considered much more serious, and has a much wider dimension than mere oath-taking. It is a mystical joining together of two parties, be they individuals or groups, in which each of the parties literally swallows the bond of the other. 'Igba-ndu' could be undertaken by two villages or individuals who had experienced cracks in their relationship occasioned by mistrust and betrayal. For instance, two neighbouring villages that had fought and spilled blood over a disputed piece of land could enter into 'Igba-ndu'. Also, in a place like Ihechiowa, a man who suspects that his wife was cheating on him could demand that she proves her innocence and commitment to the marriage by taking an oath.[81]

A number of reasons have been given as explanations for oath-taking in traditional Igbo society. These include the need to establish the truth of what is said, especially when relationships are not anchored on trust and confidence. It is intended to affirm the veracity of the claims of an

individual whose conduct in the past was dubious and to make him/her desist from further misconduct. Secondly, oath-taking could serve to establish and maintain good human relations, especially between two individuals who are not related by blood. In this instance, the parties involved go through a ritual that often involves each donating some quantity of blood which is then mixed and either swallowed by the parties or rubbed into each other's body. The two then become committed to not cheating or hurting each other. Finally, oath-taking could serve to compel parties to keep their shared secrets from others. Among secret societies, for example, it is obligatory for members to swear to an oath of secrecy not to divulge their organization's internal dynamics and secrets to non-members.[82]

At other times, a wife who is suspected of involvement in the husband's death could be compelled to take an oath to prove her innocence. Suspicious husbands may ask their wives to swear to an oath not to divert their property to their (wives') maiden homes on their (husband's) death. In some Igbo communities, oath-taking is used to detect and sort out criminals. More often than not, this happens when a suspect does not own up to the crime.

No matter the form and purpose of an oath, the deity in whose name the oath was taken, was expected to inflict maximum punishment on anyone who committed perjury. The general belief was, and still is, that the culprit will die irrespective of where he/she runs to after lying on such an oath. However, cases such as murder, arson, poisoning, stealing, as well as incest, involved a lot more care in pre-colonial times. The accused

person was usually made to appear before the village council. To prove his/her innocence and clear his/her guilt, oath was administered on him/her, after a week. The accused had to reappear before the village council to swear to the oath. The idea was that after his/her first appearance, the one-week interval would be enough for him/her to be cross-examined by his/her relations regarding his/her innocence or otherwise. The oath was then administered on him/her thereafter. If nothing happened to him/her one year after taking the oath, the innocence of the accused was proved beyond reasonable doubt. This was usually celebrated by his relatives and friends.

Pre-colonial Igbo society made laws and prohibitions to regulate community life. These had both political and religious significance. Thus, when customs or codes were breached, priests of oracles as well as diviners were quick to alert the community of the actions as well as the dire consequences of not promptly propitiating the gods and giving justice to individuals who had been wronged. Among others, murder, stealing (especially of yam), incest, fighting in the farmland during the planting season, as well as hiding children born with legs out first or those born with teeth, or goats that delieverd in the night, were abominable acts which, it was believed, attracted the wrath of the gods. These were considered contraventions against established and accepted social and religious norms. The priest of the earth deity was the one that usually made the sacrifices needed to appease the gods because all forms of abomination ('aru') were against the land.

Justice, by which we mean "giving a person what he deserves, the equitable and fair judgment and punishment to the offenders, in the light of existing laws, morals and customs"[83] was part of pre-colonial Igbo society. According to Otonti Nduka, retributive justice was perhaps, "...the most frequently encountered and best articulated form of justice..."[84] He sees it as the foundation or basis of many legal and social sanctions prevalent among the Igbo. That is why the principle is enunciated in Igbo proverbs. For example, there is a saying among the Igbo that, "Onye mere ihe oma, ga-erite ihe oma, onye mere ihe ojoo, ga-erite ihe ojoo". ("He who does good deeds is rewarded with good deeds, while the person who delights in doing evil will always reap evil").

Apart from retributive justice, another form of justice that was prevalent in pre-colonial Igbo society was commutative justice. Here, the idea is on the need for individuals to support and complement each other's efforts towards achieving collective success. There is a saying that illustrates this principle, namely, that "if the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand should also wash the right hand". Similarly, the principle of distributive justice had to do with liberty and equality. It demanded equality in the award of material benefits, such as equality of opportunity and equal pay for equal work.[85] Thus, together with retributive justice which emphasized reparation for injuries suffered and commutative justice which demanded that parties engaged in transactions involving bargaining should be fair and honour the contracts mutually agreed on, distributive justice helped to stabilize pre-colonial Igbo society by ensuring

that peace and harmony were sustained on the basis of equality and fairness.

The pre-colonial Igbo were also very religious. In fact, there was a sort of spiritual commonwealth between the living, the dead, and the gods. Politics and government had much in common with religion because while government and politics involved serving the people through the creation of new rules and conditions for life, they also served to ensure the relevance and application of old rules. Thus, the belief was that any individual who failed to adhere to such old rules was invariably challenging the spiritual components of the community, namely the gods and the ancestors. It was, after all, the gods and the ancestors that created such old laws in the first place. It was, therefore, the fear of an inevitable retaliation by the gods and the ancestors that ensured conformity to the laws of the community. That also explains why oracles and diviners played very important roles in the Igbo traditional political system.[86]

Every household in pre-colonial Igboland had its own shrines and gods. The various lineages also had their own shrines and gods which were usually located at a central point as directed by diviner priests. 'Ogirisi' or 'Ogurusi' trees were planted to indicate the principal shrines. According to Edmund Ilogu, the shrines and the gods were worshipped and offered sacrifices at specific periods as ordered by the diviner.[87]

The gods were worshipped and sacrifices made to them either to ask for their blessings or to atone for sins committed by individuals, groups, or even the whole community. The belief was that no one person could commit a sin against the gods. Consequently, the punishment intended for

one individual was often visited on all members of the family or community. Similarly, the blessings of the gods were shared by all. Indeed, the life attitudes of every individual was geared towards the gods, and the brotherhood of man was expressed by the fact that what affects one individual affects the entire village.[88]

In Igbo traditional politics and religion, the 'ofo' staff of office occupied an important place. It was the symbol of political authority of the family, lineage, village and community leaders. Usually, it was the lineage staff of office for the first or oldest son in the family ('Okpara', 'Okwara', 'Okpala', or 'Opara'), and he could not be deprived of it except there were cogent reasons for that, such as negligence or insanity. In traditional Igbo society, 'ofo' was also the staff of the religious authority of the priests, especially the priest of the earth deity. It was used as a channel through which the elders prayed to the spirits[89]. It was also used to distinguish the order of seniority at every level of the social organization in pre-colonial Igboland.

Thus, in both the political and religious spheres, the 'ofo' was held as a special and sacred staff of office. It signified the unity, truth and the symbolic nexus between the living, the dead, and the gods. It was also a spiritualized moral agent which represented what was right and just. According to A.G Leonard, [90] whenever the good offices of human judges and mediators could not satisfactorily settle a case between two contending parties, recourse had to be had to the 'ofo' as an impartial arbiter. It was, in other words, the Igbo equivalent of the modern symbol of justice in law courts, whose pendulum always favoured truth and justice

over evil and mischief. It was used for swearing, especially in very serious cases.

Igbo traditional religion was anchored on a cosmic structure which perceived the universe as consisting of the sky above ('Elu igwe'), the solid earth ('Ala', 'Ali', 'Ana', 'Ani'), and the underworld ('Ala mmuo'). The high heavens were the abode of the supreme god ('Chukwu'). Important and powerful gods or divinities, such as 'Amadioha', 'Kamalu', and 'Anyanwu', also dwelled there. The Earth was the abode of men, the earth deity and some minor deities, while the underworld was home to the dead ancestors and numerous other spirits and natural forces. Yet, man's life in all these was intricately related with the activities in both the sky and the underworld because of the belief in a continuous flow of movements from one sphere to the others; that is, a cyclical movement of life and forces through and in all three cosmic spheres.[91]

The picture of the Igbo world-view and religious orientation has been summarized thus:

> *The traditional Igbo vision of his world is a coherent system of ideas and concepts which explains how things came into being, gives the rationale for different cultural institutions and practices, and above all, located the place of a moral being in the universe. Igbo traditional world-view is fundamentally a religious one. Man's fortune and destiny are conceptualized in dynamic and delicate relationship with the activities of numerous spiritual beings and forces believed to inhabit the various regions of the cosmic order. However, the enhancement of his life remains the most vital consideration in the entire perception and scheme of things. Within that framework, the variety of activities which the traditional Igbo perform most*

> *often "in partnership with the gods, ancestors and well- disposed spirit forces", assume their full meaning and expression. Such activities include divination, ritual sacrifices, and other forms of worship."*[92]

There was a belief in a Supreme Being called 'Chukwu', 'Chineke', 'Obasi di N'elu', or 'Olisa'. There was also a belief in the worship of various classes of divinities. While individual life was believed to have come directly from the Supreme Being ('Chukwu' or 'Chineke'), the deities or divinities were linked to the origin and destiny of the people. In this case, therefore, there was a bond of relationship which was both religious and moral and which connected man with the many classes of spirits or supernatural beings within the Igbo cosmology. Morality in this context, derived from both the authority of the social group and the force of the people's religious cosmology[93]. The traditional Igbo world-view of morality was, therefore, such that it ensured orderly and harmonious co-existence through the creation or construction of a number of norms and taboos. Those that constituted disregard or misconduct attracted spiritual sanctions. Individuals and groups guilty of such offences had to atone for their misconduct either through retributive justice (that is, restitution or compensation) or through appeasement by way of ritual sacrifices to the gods.

Finally, Igbo cosmology believed in life after death. In other words, life's enhancement entailed a strong commitment to religious and ritual acts to enable an individual to live well in the land of the living and to transit and continue blissfully to the after-life as a worthy ancestor. The transition to the level of ancestor-hood represented the fullest realization of

personal salvation, and it was only for individuals who did not commit any abominable acts but lived upright and moral lives. Such individuals were adored and were not only expected to watch over the living but also to reincarnate in their families. That way, their lineages could be sustained.

One other thing that has to be noted and appreciated is the fact that in pre-colonial Igboland, the traditional social structures as well as the institutions of the family, religion, and economic pursuits all placed emphasis not on the individual but on the commune. Accordingly, moral obligations were not guided by the exercise of individual moral judgment and conscience, but more by the demands of existing moral codes, tradition, and custom. Every member of the village, for instance, was socialized into the ethos of that village through observing the customary behavioural attitude and moral code in the locality. Thus, every individual knew what was expected of him/her and what he/she expected in return.[94]

Igbo group life in pre-colonial times was integrated and continuous, and provided satisfying moral conceptions of life for the individual who, willingly or unwillingly, had to share in the group life. For instance, most traditional homes were polygamous, and the father built houses for his wives who lived with their children. He had the right to ask any of his children to run errands for him. Yet, it was more of the duty of the mothers to train their children in the manners, ethos, and patterns of life in the community[95]. But the fathers as well as members of the extended family were also expected to teach, admonish, and correct the children. Thus, communal attitude to child upbringing was aided by the fact that many members of the extended family often lived close together in a compound.

It was, therefore, easy for a child to be watched and guided closely by many of his/her close relatives[96]. This, no doubt, ensured proper moral upbringing of children.

A major distinguishing feature of pre-colonial Igbo society and politics was the high premium placed on achievement, especially the accumulation of wealth. This ensured that those who, by reason of birth, could not become lineage heads could at least bolster their social image by buying titles and joining privileged associations. Competition and rivalry were therefore, seen as the life principle of Igbo society. They kept everybody and every group up-and-doing in order to remain relevant in the scheme of things.

Not only did this tendency to materialism result in a highly competitive and economically stratified society,[97] it also made the Igbo to be ultra-democratic, tolerant and individualistic.[98] Yet, these values and attitudes had their merits. They kept disruptive social tensions under control because, in the words of Afigbo,"... any social segment that allowed its internal tension to get out of hand would be overshadowed by its rival groups, and what was worse, would be laughed at by those rivals".[99]

Furthermore, and as Nwabara has observed, the jealously, internal squabble, and inter-village fighting which were the direct outcome of the competitive and materialistic nature of the people and which appear to have kept them divided and suspicious of each other, vanishes in the face of any external threats to their corporate existence and development.[100] That was why the people were able to adapt to the colonial situation where

they now had to compete with members of other ethnic groups for relevance in the new scheme of things.

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CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION OF THE IGBO STATE UNION

Although consensus does not establish a fact, there is a preponderance of evidence indicating that the emergence of ethnic unions in Africa and elsewhere was a direct consequence of colonialism and the growth of urban areas. This is because colonialism brought people from different ethnic groups into direct

contacts and led to a struggle for scarce social, economic and political opportunities which created the need for urban residents to require the assistance of members of their group to survive and advance. Urbanization in Nigeria and many European colonies followed a pattern that has aptly been described as 'enclave', a situation in which development, so to speak, was concentrated mainly along those areas through which the rail-lines passed. Such lines, of course, connected the areas where export products were produced and the areas through which they were exported to Europe.

This invariably led to a lopsided type of urbanization whereby some areas came to have a headstart over others. Thus, places like Jos and Enugu, among others, emerged as important urban centres because they had natural resources which Europeans needed to transport to their countries, and, therefore, rail lines were built to connect them to the coast. Similarly, the port facilities in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Calabar contributed immensely to the urban status of these places. [1] It could, therefore, be justifiably argued that the emergence of some parts of Nigeria and Africa as centres of western commerce and administration constituted a veritable contact situation between the indigenous peoples and European civilization. This contact, according to Kenneth Little, created, "...new social and psychological needs, which life in the countryside was rarely able to satisfy".[2] The outcome of this, especially during the colonial period, was an exodus of people from the countryside to the urban areas. Here, money could be earned to satisfy a variety of needs associated with westernization, like the purchase of modern manufactured goods, electrical appliances, and so on. According to Elliot Skinner, there was a phenomenal increase in the number of stranger elements in the newly emerging urban centres.[3]

While it is true that some Nigerian societies absorbed strangers in pre-colonial times, it is also true that in the colonial period, the status and role of such

stranger elements changed profoundly. In the pre-colonial era, strangers were political subjects of the local leaders of their host communities; in colonial times, stranger elements ceased to be answerable to those local political leaders of the host communities but became 'subjects' of the European colonialists. Indeed, both the stranger elements and landlords of the developing urban areas were now subjected to European rule and authority. The powers of the local political leaders of those emerging urban areas were not only whittled down but were also entirely subjected to the colonialists' laws, scrutiny and sanctions.

Furthermore, whereas in pre-colonial times stranger elements were compelled to understand the social systems of their host communities and to evolve ways for dealing with them, European colonization changed the situation. Stranger elements no longer needed to study and observe the traditional routines of their host communities. Rather, they became relatively insulated from them since they no longer depended on their hosts. What they needed to understand and abide by became the laws and civic duties prescribed by the colonialists. The strangers' economic status and relations, vis-à-vis their hosts, also changed. They began to work either for European firms or for Africans engaged in non-traditional activities like the cultivation of plantation crops for the export market. They also did not pay taxes and tributes to local landlords except for those taxes that were imposed by the colonial government and which the local leaders were collecting on their behalf. In this case, like other official payments, both the strangers and members of their host communities paid the taxes.

In a way, therefore, European colonialism affected the status and role of both the stranger elements and indigenous peoples in most African societies. Economically and socially, stranger elements benefited immensely from the presence of Europeans and the opportunity it afforded them to move up in society, sometimes at the expense of members of their host communities. The pattern of migration during the colonial period was first and foremost a function of the

opportunity structure and secondarily, a function of distance.[4] Most migrants to the urban areas regarded their stay there as temporary. The result was that in many African urban societies, people began to act not as members of one nation but as members of ethnic categories with which they identified, and with which they were also sometimes identified with by non-members of such a group. In other words, there were intense struggles between groups in the urban areas, and these were predicated on two related variables, namely power and wealth. It was the competition for these relatively scarce resources that, more often than not, created deep social cleavages between ethnic groups.[5]

Audrey Smock has observed that, "...initial contacts with modernity... strengthened rather than weakened ethnic affiliations."[6] These contacts were accelerated by the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 and the construction of railway lines within the same period. Evergreen Obinalli writes that:

> *Before 1914, ethnic identity was weak and loose among the peoples of Nigeria. Groups were not very conscious of their ethnicity.... There was also no apparent need for individuals to seek recognition and protection under ethnic structures and no grim competition existed among ethnic neighbours. These conditions weakened the idea of pan-ethnic identities....*[7]

The contacts and their accompanying competition and tensions changed everything, and affiliation with one's ethnic kinsfolk became a key to survival in the urban centres. The strength of the affiliations lay in the fact that improvements in the quality and quantity of communication and transport media brought groups in the urban areas closer to each other, and each tried to hold on to its cultural chasteness from the influences of new cultures. Sometimes, the reaction was even

one of xenophobic hostility. With time, ethnic unions were formed by urban residents from a particular part of the country. These accelerated the acculturative process for new migrants and perpetuated aspects of the traditional culture, like the use of the vernacular language and adherence to customary ideas of social morality and discipline.[8]

According to Henry Nwosu, ethnic and cultural associations were formed by the elites in the emerging urban centres to, "...mediate the discontinuities arising from the encompassing process of modernization, and to advance their claims and competition against other groups in the society."[9] Discussing western Igbo immigrants in Ibadan between the 1920s and 1960s, some scholars have argued that:

> *As a general rule, all migrants from each locality in western Igbo have village, town or clan union. When the number of immigrants from a locality is too small to warrant the formation of such a union, they tend to associate themselves with the town or village union of their mother's home.*[10]

It was in such ethnic associations that loyalties and identities were reinforced and measures adopted to create in-group cohesion, especially as one ethnic group became stereotyped. Thus, it was not uncommon for an ethnic group, under certain structural circumstances (such as prejudice against its members in the urban areas), to manipulate some values, norms, beliefs, symbols and ceremonials from its traditional culture in order to develop an informal organization. Such an organization, though overtly cultural, also served the political purpose of a good weapon in the group's struggle for power with other groups within the urban situation. This explains why scholars like David Parkin have argued that ethnic ties have a practical, moral and occasionally, politically usefulness.[11] These conditions

and developments constitute the background to the formation, first, of the Igbo Federal Union and later the Igbo State Union in the 1930s and 1940s respectively.

The Igbo Federal Union, 1936-1948

Between 1861 and 1914, the British succeeded in subduing the peoples of what is today known as Nigeria. This began with the conquest of Lagos in 1861 and the subsequent amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. The import of the British conquest and colonization of Nigeria lay in the fact that it witnessed unprecedented migrations of peoples from their home areas or local communities to other parts of the new nation. However, such migration was mostly to the burgeoning urban areas because, as already noted, it was there that modern jobs could be secured and money earned to satisfy a variety of needs.

The Igbo could rightly be referred to as the Nigerian group that migrated the most to other parts of country, beginning as early as the 1900s. Foremost Igbo leader and Nigeria's first President, Nnamdi Azikiwe, was born in Zungeru, Northern Nigeria, in 1904, indicating that by the said 1904, his Igbo parents were already in Northern Nigeria. Among the Igbo, migrating to the Western and Northern parts of Nigeria became the rule rather than the exception. While some scholars believe that the trend was as a result of Igbo entrepreneurship and culture that allows adventure and taking risk, others have argued that land hunger and over-population in the Igbo-homeland are important factors that necessitated the migration.[12] Land hunger and over-population were not, however, a general trend in Igboland between the 1930s and 1960s. For instance, communities in the Cross River Igbo communities of Abam, Ihechiowa, Ohafia, Edda, Nkporo and Abiriba, among others, had enough land for whatever purpose anyone needed them. Individuals from these communities who left for the cities were, therefore, motivated by the need to search for greener pastures. Igbo migration was more or

less cultural and adventurous, backed by the spirit of entrepreneurship and the willingness to take risk in foreign lands. The truth is that the Igbo migrated to the north because that part of Nigeria had business and other opportunities which the indigenous people could not fill. Similarly, those Igbo who went to Lagos did so because that area was open to westernization earlier than Igboland, becoming the centre of modern activities-business, political, social, et cetera. What is basic is that forces introduced by British colonialism attracted those Igbo who left their homelands for the urban areas within and outside Igboland.

In the 1910s and 1920s, Igbo migrants were able to establish some relationships with their hosts, though such relationships were basically transitory since those migrants still retained links with their home villages.[13] Their migration was not limited to outside Igboland. It had an internal dimension as many of them settled in Igbo towns like Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, and Port Harcourt, interacting with Nigerians from other ethnic groups. M.I. Asinobi arrived in Port Harcourt from Mbieri to work on railway construction as early as 1914, and because of his early arrival, about three decades later he was referred to as the city's first citizen. In the early 1920s, Igbo immigrants were already established in Ibadan along with other stranger elements like the Hausa-Fulani. When the colonial government and the Ibadan local authorities agreed that the city should practice ethnic segregation, the government quartered the Igbo settlers in Mokola, Ekotodo and Inalande.[15]

Like Asinobi, many of the Igbo that left their homes for the emerging urban towns across Nigeria were casual labourers, traders, employees of European firms, among other employments. In Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Jos and other areas to which the Igbo went, they were seen as a mobile and objective people in the sense that they were regarded as not subscribing to the conventions of their host communitiees. In another sense, they were seen as opportunists because in trade and finance, they profited from the relationships they had with their hosts. One

major outcome of this state of affairs was that in a number of instances, the Igbo stranger elements found themselves in active competition with the local people for jobs and the economic advantages introduced by European colonialism. They formed ethnic associations in these urban areas, which provided the forums for the expression of some strong feelings of loyalty and obligation to the kinship group, town or village.

But the Igbo were not the only group that organized voluntary ethnic associations. Other Nigerian groups, except perhaps the Hausa-Fulani, did organize such unions or associations.[15] For example, there was the Ibibio State Union formed in 1928 by some Ibibio elite, as well as the Urhobo Union, among others. These ethnic unions initially did not engage in any mud-slinging with each other, probably because the colonial government was seen as the one big external enemy to contend with.

The argument is that the ethnic consciousness of the 1930s and 1940s was more of a conscious struggle for limited economic and social resources. It was also a safeguard for the psychologically insecure new migrants in the townships. This position was to change in the late 1940s and early 1950s, especially when regionalism was introduced by the 1951 Macpherson constitution. Put differently, prior to the 1940s and 1950s, loyalty to and membership of an ethnic association in the urban areas did not always present a negative or divisive character. Instead, it did lead to the socialization of new migrants from the villages. Such unions or associations were also not overtly political, and did not involve themselves in intensive political struggles.

However, right from the first time when people from various ethnic backgrounds found themselves under one colonial government, stereotyping began to affect their relationships. While it is true that early inter-ethnic contacts and awareness bred understanding and cooperation among Nigerian peoples, it is

equally true that familiarity led to contempt. This was more easily noticeable in the colonial and post-colonial periods of great resource scarcity and desire for more and more, and the political agitations and the competition arising therefrom. Many ethnic groups, thus, came to distrust and malign each other.

In addition, during the colonial era, Nigerian peoples and societies varied significantly in terms of their population and patterns of western contact.[16] While the Yoruba had immense advantages from their early contacts with western civilization, the Igbo were later entrants. As at the 1920s, for instance, the Igbo had no lawyer or doctor, whereas the Yoruba had twelve practicing lawyers and eight medical doctors.[17] To the Igbo, therefore, education became a basic necessity, and most of their ethnic unions had, as their primary objective, the building of schools and sponsoring of students to study overseas. They saw the unfolding events of the urban environment as an eye-opener, and migration to the urban areas became increasingly important.

Igbo migrants who left Igboland for towns in the Yoruba and Hausa–Fulani areas had the advantage of coming from a society (or societies) where individual dynamism and success was applauded and respected. Competing and struggling to rise in the ranks of society was not new to them, likewise the ability to adapt to new circumstances or become part of positive developments. They very quickly became cosmopolitan in outlook and willingly came to see Nigeria as a possible area of dispersion.[18] The reverse was the case among the Yoruba who were characterized by a hierarchical political system, common myths and history, a seemingly favourable economic situation, and relatively precise boundaries. This explains why the cosmopolitan Igbo imbibed such concepts and slogans as 'the Nigerian fatherland' and even 'Pan-Africanism', while the Yoruba transcended less easily the 'small fatherland' of Yorubaland. Of course, the Nigerian fatherland would appear to have had less appeal to them.[19]

Indeed, until the 1920s and 1930s, the Igbo lagged woefully behind the Yoruba in both the number of schools and university graduates they had, as well as in other benefits which European civilization had brought. In no time, however, the upwardly mobile and energetic Igbo whose migration habits and ease of adjustment to social situations were astounding began to threaten the economic and social advantages which the Yoruba had enjoyed. The Igbo, had, by the 1930s, embraced Christianity and the attendant good things of life, and began to catch up with the Yoruba. This was largely so because the Igbo had an insatiable appetite for Western education, and with time, educational facilities in Igboland also proliferated. According to J. S. Coleman, the Igbo were so desirous of education that they often remarked that they were willing to accept it even from the devil.[20] The Igbo pursuit for educational advancement, no doubt, frightened the Yoruba and created a relationship of tension and acrimony between members of the two ethnic groups, especially in Lagos.[21]

These events constitute the background to the eventual formation in 1944 of a pan-Igbo organization, the Igbo Federal Union. It united a multitude of voluntary associations formed essentially to foster civic welfare in the home communities of Igboland and the Igbo settler communities in Nigeria's urban centres. Its predecessor was the Ibo Union, formed in Lagos in 1936. The formation of the Ibo Union, Lagos, was itself the climax of the benefits of the Igbo receptivity to the changes occasioned by Christianity, western education and other European influences. It was formed both as an instrument for reinforcing the advantages gained in the capital city of Lagos as well as protecting Igbo settlers in the area from the harsh realities of Yoruba and British hostilities. In the words of Smock, "In fact, if the urban migration had not called the ...unions into being, the competition over development resources probably would have".[22]

The Ibo Union, Lagos, and the multitude of Igbo voluntary associations in other parts of Nigeria, were therefore, the most important avenues for softening, for the average Igbo immigrant, the shock of transplantation from the certainties of village life into the uncertainties and hostilities of urban life. In Ibadan, Igbo town and village unions served a wide range of purposes for new immigrant economic, social and emotional, among others. New immigrants arrived from their Igbo homeland on the invitation of their already successful relatives, though sometimes many, seeking better opportunities, arrived without invitation, and therefore, with no proper plan for the next day.[23] For those new immigrants, it was their Igbo kinsfolk in Ibadan that assisted them in settling down and securing temporary accommodation and employment. Sometimes, an amount of money, like £7 for a £10 per month job, had to be paid to secure a job.[24] Under such circumstances, it became the responsibility of the Igbo kinsmen, who understood their way around Ibadan and knew what contacts to use, to ensure that the monies were remitted to the right persons and that the jobs were eventually secured. In Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Ibadan, among other urban centres where Igbo migrants settled, village or town unions provided the forum where the helper kinsmen were located. This underscores the centrality of those unions in the lives of Igbo immigrants in the period covered by this book.

Prior to the formation of Igbo Federal Union, there do not seem to have been any organisation claiming to speak for the Igbo group as a whole. The lack of such a body among the Igbo may not be unconnected with the people's traditional republicanism vis-à-vis the Yoruba constitutional monarchism and Hausa-Fulani aristocratic religious autocracy and conservatism. But as Chukwuemeka Onwubu has rightly argued,

> *...the absence of a centralized state or system of government, paradoxically, did not in any way hinder the*

> *forging of a cultural uniformity among the Igbo, thereby enabling them to retain the social unity that is characteristic of a national group.*[25]

Put succinctly, although there may be some geographic variations which could have invariably introduced some differences in the ecological adjustment of the Igbo, certain pan-Igbo similarities existed in the group's political, cultural and economic spheres. These similarities, more than anything else, brought the Igbo Union, Lagos, and the Igbo Federal Union into being.

The Igbo Union, Lagos, is said to have been formed in the wake of a reception held in honour of S. E. Onwu who returned in 1936 from England as a medical doctor.[26] Although James Coleman asserted that the Union was formed in 1936 to welcome Akanu Ibiam back from Europe as the first Igbo medical doctor, B.O.N. Eluwa argued, in an interview with the author, that 1935 was the date of formation of the Union in Lagos after a reception for S.E. Onwu as the first Igbo medical doctor. Prior to Onwu's return, the Igbo occupied few or no significant positions in the government or commercial establishments of colonial Nigeria, whereas the Yoruba occupied most of such positions. The Igbo lacked the capacity to compete with them for which reason those Igbo who went to Lagos were employed, at best, as labourers, house-boys, cooks and stewards to Europeans, Brazilians, West Indians and Yoruba. They were treated as people from the backwater, and the Yoruba derisively called them "kobo kobo, aje anyo" (literally meaning, cannibals). Thus, the Igbo were taunted in very debasing manners that greatly deflated their ego. This is understandable since they came from an environment where personal achievements and merits largely took precedence over ascriptive criteria. To such Igbo therefore, references to one's family background as a

criterion for recognition and acceptance were incongruous with their culture and values, unlike what obtained among their Yoruba hosts in Lagos.

Indeed, Igbo residents in colonial Lagos were mostly unhappy with the menial jobs and the concomitant humiliation. But they were a resilient group, which was why they began to establish voluntary ethnic and mutual aid unions mainly to help their kith and kin at home and in Lagos to acquire western education. In fact, as early as 1933, one Cives Agboris (who had probably changed his name in order not to be identified easily as an Igbo), wrote in support of the founding of an Igbo organization that will unite the Igbo in Lagos. Agboris cited the Ekumeku Movement formed between 1883 and 1914 as having shown, in his words, "...what a keen sense of the importance of ...unity the Ibos had and demonstrated to what extent like may go in search of like even under the most disadvantageous and primitive conditions."[27]

Although Agboris blamed western education for the breakup of early Igbo racial elasticity and sympathetic group-thinking, he argued that:

> *...it is confidently hoped that education is the only real agent that will give rebirth to the dying embers of the Ibo national zeal. The old time unity was a banded protest against any encroachment on the material well-being of the tribe; the new will be that and more; it will be the means to free the Ibos from the throes of both mental and moral thralldom and I see no better place to start the work of re-union than Lagos.*[28]

As a result of calls such as Agbori's, Igbo clan and town unions proliferated in Lagos and other major urban centres in Nigeria. According to Simon Ottenberg, where the Christian missions and the British colonial administration were unwilling or reluctant to build schools, local Igbo communities took it upon

themselves to build schools and even recruit their own teachers.[29] It was by such innate stamina of the Igbo for hard-work and industry that they gradually began to find white-collar jobs in Lagos and other towns. The products of the community schools initially took up employment in the Railway Cooporation, Post and Telegraphs, the Police Force and Prisons Service, which, to a degree, were unattractive to the better-educated and advantaged Yoruba. However, the return of Onwu and Akanu Ibiam from Europe as qualified medical doctors of Igbo origin emboldened some energetic Igbo to seek the formation of a federation of all the village and clan unions in Lagos to be known as the Igbo Union, Lagos. This, according to Coleman, "...was the beginning of a pan-Ibo movement, the main purpose of which was to advance the Ibo people, principally in the field of education."[30]

The inaugural meeting of the Igbo Union, Lagos, was held in June 1936 and was largely pioneered by Anioma (or Western) Igbo residents of Lagos, like Dennis Osadebey, Hyacinth Ugboma Kaine, and Oguegbunam Dafe. Osadebey himself was a cosmopolitan Anioma Igbo (from Asaba) who, from the age of nineteen in 1930, had begun working in different Nigerian urban centres—Port Harcourt, Calabar and Lagos. While he became the first Secretary of the Union, Kaine, an Ogbaru Igbo and first lawyer of Ogbaru extraction, became the founding President. Most of the original unions that joined the body were also from the Anioma or Western Igbo areas (in present Delta State). Thereafter, representatives from various Igbo town unions existing in Lagos began to attend the Union's meetings. The decision to base attendance to the Union's meetings on clan and divisional representation was to avoid unwieldiness at meetings.

However, mass meetings were sometimes arranged in which all Igbo were free to attend.[31] In 1943, a new executive arrangement saw Osadebey becoming the

Union's Treasurer, H. K. Offonry became General Secretary, while B.O.N. Eluwa was elected the Assistant General Secretary.[32]

In the same year (1943), the Igbo Union in Lagos launched a campaign to federate all Igbo unions in Nigeria, and in the following year, a pan-Igbo organization, the Igbo Federal Union, was inaugurated, with Lagos as its headquarters. It had as its specific objective, the building and running of thirty secondary schools in Igboland and the establishment of an Igbo National Bank[33]. Up to December 1945, the Igbo Federal Union was a nominal organization that depended entirely on the Igbo Union, Lagos. Although it was theoretically a federation of all the Igbo Unions in Nigeria and the Cameroons, as at the said December 1945, only four other Igbo Unions—Igbo Unions in Port Harcourt, Kano, Sapele and Aba—had indicated interest in being members of the Igbo Federal Union.

A vigorous approach aim at enlisting more and more Igbo Unions began in 1944 when Eluwa was elevated to the position of Secretary-General of the Union. He and the Lagos office of the Union began an earnest publicity campaign, reaching out to Igbo town unions across Nigeria and inviting them to register with the Igbo Federal Union. Through Eluwa's initiative, the federated body called an Igbo Federal Union Conference in 1945. The Secretary-General also set about organising two other Igbo bodies which he felt would enable the Igbo Federal Union to execute its projects without much stress. These bodies were the Igbo Women Association and the Igbo Youth League.[34]

Some of the town unions that joined the federated body paid their affiliation fees at the 1945 Conference. Also, in the course of the Conference, Eluwa suggested that for a more effective organization of the Union's secretariat and activities, there was need for the appointment of a full-time General-Secretary. The Conference accepted the suggestion and mandated the Executive Committee of the

Igbo Federal Union to put to implement it. Ironically, the Committee turned to the initiator of the idea, Eluwa, with an appeal that he should fill that position. For Eluwa, who was then a young Customs officer aspiring to rise in the ranks of the Nigerian Customs Department, this was a difficult responsibility to accept. He was put in a dilemma; to turn down to serve in a capacity he had himself introduced, or accept the offer and resign from an enviable Customs job that paid him reasonably well in financial terms. The dilemma was made worse by the fact that the Union job, being more of a patriotic service than the traditional civil service or company job, did not promise to be financially rewarding. Although Eluwa did not put the financial aspect into much consideration following his enthusiasm to work for the Union, the truth was that as a young man, personal and family responsibilities were bound to come and, of course, increase as the days go by.

Consequently, Eluwa's father, relations and friends advised him to reject the unattractive full-time Secretary-General offer and hold on to his plum job with the Customs Department. However, his patriotic sentiments, accompanied by encouragements from close friends and associates like his Assistant General-Secretary, Lawrence Osuagwu, and a colleague of his at the Customs Department, P. O. Nsugbe, made him accept the responsibility. Irrespective of this, an important event in the life of Eluwa that made him accept the offer was the news of his father's death early in March 1946. In his words:

> *I received with shock the news of my father's death. Now that father was no longer there to see my acceptance of the Igbo Federal Union office as an act of disobedience to him, I felt free to accept it.* [35]

Thus, in July 1946, Eluwa took the risk and resigned his enviable job with the Customs Department and accepted the offer of a stipendiary General-Secretary of the Igbo Federal Union. It was the same patriotic zeal to help transform

Igboland through the establishment of a bank and thirty secondary schools, with the possibility of subsequently building a university, that made him reject an overseas scholarship which the National Executive Committee of the Union offered him. The scholarship offer was an inducement to make Eluwa accept the Union's full-time General Secretary job. But he was more interested in staying back in Nigeria to see the Union actualize its dreams, especially the building of schools and the establishment of the Igbo National Bank.[36]

As a full-time General Secretary, Eluwa had to embark on activities that were revenue-generating so that the lean purse of the Igbo Federal Union would not be quickly exhausted and its objectives stultified. The Union, therefore, had to set up a secretariat in a building at Oshodi Street, Lagos Island, from where the General-Secretary embarked upon the arduous task of publicizing the Union and familiarizing himself with Igboland. Both duties, of course, involved extensive travelling, which was made the more difficult by the lean financial resources of the Union. Eventually, the General-Secretary decided on an idea that paid off handsomely in the end. He began using whatever little money that was available to pay his way to the nearest town from Lagos and trust the Igbo people there to bear the cost of the fare to his next destination. It was through this method that he was able to elicit interest in the Igbo Federal Union and its activities among the Igbo in many of Nigeria's urban centres.

Just as the Igbo Federal Union was beginning to spread and bring the Igbo together in the 1940s, the fame of Nnamdi Azikiwe and his anti-colonial activities were also spreading fast not only in Nigeria but across British West Africa. He had travelled to the United States for higher education in 1925 and came back, albeit briefly, at the end of 1934. Because he was refused employment by the colonial government, Azikiwe left for Accra, Ghana, in the same year, where he edited the Accra-based *African Morning Post Newspaper.* In 1937, he published his highly

visionary book, *Renascent African*. He later came back to Nigeria in the same 1937, settling in Lagos and publishing a daily newspaper, *The West African Pilot.*[37] This paper launched fearless and, sometimes, virulent criticism of the British colonial administration in Nigeria and her other West African colonies,

Azikiwe grew from strength to strength, and his popularity was a source of pride to every Igbo and, indeed, Nigerian. Although he did not participate in forming either the Igbo Union, Lagos or the Igbo Federal Union, his emergence on the political scene was nothing short of electrifying to the battered psyche of the Igbo in Lagos. His presence and activities were inspirational and helped the Igbo regain their self-confidence and become more assertive, a situation that won them both the admiration and hostility of other Nigerians. Although Azikiwe had predecessors like Onwu and Ibiam, who had also attained high educational and social status, and thus helped in influencing and inspiring the Igbo, he, (Azikiwe), walked the Nigeria political landscape more enigmatically and in ways never seen before. Irrespective of the fact that his predecessors, unlike him, identified fully with developments around the Igbo world when they returned from Europe, Azikiwe's entrance was, nonetheless, more indelible and ground-moving.

He did not immediately identify himself with the Igbo, nor did he help in organizing the Unions. Azikiwe considered himself first and foremost an African, secondly a Nigerian and lastly, an Igbo. Of course, he was not ignorant of the importance of the Igbo Federal Union, illustrated by the fact that in one mass meeting in Lagos, he donated a hundred pounds sterling to the Union.[38] Moreover, the Igbo Union, Lagos, was an active supporter of Azikiwe's political party, the National Council for Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) and there was an obvious close relationship between the Igbo Federal Union and the NCNC in the late 1940s. But the Union was basically a non-political organization until it was forced by circumstances to become politically assertive. In particular, the Yoruba

misunderstood the activities of first, the Igbo Union in Lagos and later of the Igbo Federal Union. They associated the Igbo Union, Lagos, with the NCNC because Azikiwe was its General-Secretary. The NCNC was, in fact, not a political party at that stage; it was just a movement. Therefore, anyone who was elected to a leading position in the Union was often brought to limelight by its close relationship with the NCNC.

As will be illustrated later, when the NCNC was launched as a political party, it had mass Igbo following and used the platforms of the Igbo Union across Nigeria and the Camerouns for publicity. Party leaders also used the halls and other useful assets of the Union to propagate the new party. This did not make the NCNC an Igbo party, nor was it intended to make it so. The party's constituency was Nigeria not Igboland, and any contrary argument would be sentimental rather than historical. The germ of truth underlying this argument is that in the Nigerian political scene between the 1940s and 1960s, no other political party exhibited the sort of national spread as the NCNC.

The Igbo State Union

There were two major reasons for the formation of the Igbo State Union, or more appropriately, for the transformation of the Igbo Federal Union to the Igbo State Union, in 1948. In the first place, in his capacity as a full-time General-Secretary of the Igbo Federal Union, Eluwa embarked on a tour of all Nigerian urban areas with sizeable Igbo population in 1947. He also visited some Igbo communities in the homeland. One outcome of these tours was his conviction that there was a pressing need to involve Igbo rural dwellers in the activities of the Union through the traditional rulers. This was against the practice of depending on urban-based Igbo union leaders who usually left their leadership positions once

they retired from the civil service, or when they were voted out of office, or when they relocated to new areas. On the other hand, traditional rulers were always there, and were, indeed, representing the people at the grass roots.

The idea of involving traditional rulers as organizers of the Igbo State Union at the grass roots was, in a way, a departure from the political culture of pre-colonial Igboland. In the 1940s, relationship between educated Igbo elite, who formed the vanguard of the emerging Igbo State Union, and the traditional rulers who Eluwa planned to involve, was not very cordial. Largely, the colonial government, in its attempt to suppress the agitations of the educated elite, was at the centre of the crisis. In the process, the educated elite and the traditional rulers began to see colonialism and the activities of the colonial officers in Igboland and Nigeria from different perspectives. Sometimes, they also adopted different approaches to the anti-colonial struggle.

Under these circumstances, one would have expected the organisers of the Igbo State Union to avoid traditional rulers in the Union's organization since most of such rulers were their rivals or enemies, per se, in their respective towns and villages. As an instance, Mbonu Ojik (who, from the inception of the Igbo State Union, was elected its Economic Adviser) was at loggerheads with the then Eze Aro, Kanu Oji and the Aro traditional cabinet, leading to his purported expulsion from the Aro Traditional Council in the first half of the 1940s. This form of disagreement was common almost all over Igboland and often threatened the peace and development of the areas. Worse, it made it difficult for the two groups—the educated elite, and the traditional rulers—to unite against colonialism. One can argue that the fact that Eluwa looked beyond this condition to advocate the co-operation and partnership of the traditional institution indicates that the pioneers of the Igbo State Union were primarily interested in development rather than in the politics of the time—Nigerian or Igbo.

However, there was also a relationship between the Igbo Unions in various Nigerian cities and the traditional chiefs. Many of the uneducated Igbo traditional leaders encouraged the education of their children and wards to ensure that they got the education which they themselves lacked and were sometimes embarrassed or insulted over. Like Ezeulu in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, who sent his son, Oduche, to school "to learn the ways of the white people and be his eyes there", some Igbo traditional rulers sometimes sent their children to school as a precautionary measure against the unknown future.[39] Thus, in the families of such traditional rulers were found educated sons, some of who also became involved in the activities of the Igbo Unions in the urban areas.

Eze Silva Ibenye Ugbala was an example of this bridge between the Igbo unions in Nigerian cities and the traditional rulers at home in Igboland. Ibenye Ugbala was the first son of Gabriel Uzoeto Ibenyenwa Ugbala, the Eze Ugo II of Okporo, near Orlu. From St. Joseph's School in rural Umuna in 1940, his father ensured he got admitted into the reputable Christ the King's College, Onitsha. Later, as a Customs officer, he was further exposed to both the western world and education through trainings in London, Paris and Pennsylvania, USA. By the 1950s, Ibenye Ugbala had become an active member of the Igbo State Union in his various locations of residence. While in Lagos between 1955 and 1956, he was an official of the Orlu Federal Union, and in 1958 he was Secretary of the Igbo State Union, Kano. Back in Lagos between 1964 and 1966, he became the President of the Orlu Federal Union, Lagos. During these periods, he also played his role as the first son of a traditional chief in Igboland, culminating in his becoming, himself, the traditional ruler of his community in the 1970s.

Like Ibenye Ugbala, Aja Wachukwu and Nwafor Orizu, the Igbo State Union's inaugural Principla Secretary and Political Adviser, respectively, were yet other Igbo of royal birth who combined traditional functions with Igbo Union's

activities. Wachukwu's father, Josiah Wachukwu, was an Ngwa paramount chief, while Orizu's father held a similar royal office in Nnewi. Although Orizu, like Wachukwu, was well-educated and perhaps, had course to sometimes disagree with the traditional leaders, he remained active as a prince in his Nnewi homeland, while also working as an Igbo State Union leader. Through this type of relationship, the Igbo unions across Nigeria and the Igbo traditional system interrelated and interacted despite the poor relationship between the average educated Igbo elite and his traditional ruler.

Eluwa, therefore, did not hesitate to seek the c-ooperation of Igbo traditional rulers in the pan-Igbo organization. Besides the idea of incorporating Igbo local chiefs, there was also the need to evolve a name that reflected the hopes of Igbo Union leaders for the emergent Nigeria. "IGBO STATE UNION" was coined by replacing the word "Federal" with "State" since Nigeria was, after all, a federation of ethnic states, and Igboland was one of those ethnic states.[40] As Eluwa toured the various urban areas with sizeable Igbo population as well as some Igbo towns and villages, he sought the opinions of the Igbo in the various parts of Nigeria he visited and shared his own views with them. This rubbing of minds, no doubt, helped to inform the new ideas he developed regarding the future of the pan-Igbo organization.

During the tour, Eluwa, as Secretary of the Igbo Federal Union, witnessed first-hand the unfair treatment which the Igbo suffered as stranger elements in many Nigerian cities, both in the hands of their hosts and the colonial officers. According to his account, when he paid a courtesy call on the Ochi Idoma at Oturkpo, he was told that the British colonial officials had tacitly encouraged the local people to hate the Igbo. On the strength of the information, Eluwa sought to have an audience with the Divisional Officer who was a Briton. On meeting with him, the Officer embarrassed Eluwa by ordering his arrest because he took a seat

before he was offered one. The second incident was in Jos where a casual porter (or buzu) made away with his trunk box while he was busy chatting with a group of Igbo Union officials and friends. In both cases, however, mother luck helped him out through the resident Igbo. At Oturkpo, the Divisional Officer, who was once at Umuahia, Eluwa's hometown recognized him and saved him from his predicament. In Jos, Professor Chike Obi (then Dr. Chike Obi) and other Igbo residents contributed money for him.[41]

Eluwa's tour of Northern Nigeria all the more convinced him of the moral and strategic imperative of the Igbo Federal Union giving way for the Igbo State Union. He was convinced that unless this was done, the educational objectives of the Union might not see the light of the day since the Igbo Union in Kano had already embarked on establishing a primary school with the intention of building a secondary school later. What the Igbo needed was a concerted effort in not order to progress in isolation.

Because of these thoughts and discoveries, Eluwa cut short his tour and returned to Lagos where he presented an interim report to the National Executive Committee of the Federal Union. In the report, he suggested the involvement of the rural Igbo communities at the local level in an all-embracing Igbo Union. The Committee accepted the idea and mandated him to submit a draft constitution based on that. It was not long before Eluwa submitted a draft constitution for the Igbo State Union to the Executive Committee of The Igbo Federal Union.[42] This was accepted for discussion and amendments and later passed by the Committee.[43] According to Eluwa, his recommendation to site the first Igbo National College at Aba was also approved by the Committee. Consequently, he visited Eze Ogbonna of Eziukwu Aba on two occasions to request for land on which to site the proposed Igbo National College.[44]

In this way, while the Igbo Federal Union worked to achieve the education of Igbo children through the building of schools and offering of scholarships, they also planned a new pan-Igbo organization that will embrace all interests in Igboland along the line of the emergent Nigerian state. They had, at the forefront of their objectives, the internal integration of the Igbo as well the integration of the ethnic group into a well-structured Nigeria. Whatever liaison leading members of the pan-Igbo movement had with the NCNC was, therefore, not aimed at making the party an Igbo party. It was rather geared towards finding a front through which national integration could be pursued while trying the best possible to keep the pan-Igbo movement away from party politics.

Leading members of the pan-Igbo movement participated in both the movement and the NCNC in their individual capacities and were free to join any other political party in the country. Their interest in the NCNC cannot simply be attributed to Azikiwe's towering influence, which the Igbo admired and tapped into at that time. The party's platform was very reachable to them, and its charter allied with their own aspirations. Thus, a major reason why leaders of the Igbo Federal Union chose to align with the NCNC was that the party's charter advocated the organization of Nigeria into culturally and linguistically-based states, and the leaders of the pan-Igbo movement anticipated that the Igbo linguistic group would become a member-state in a future commonwealth of Nigeria.[45] It was this anticipation that, indeed, informed the planned substitution of "Federal" with "State" in the name of the Union. Thus, the "Igbo State" in the proposed name of the Union was not simply a name; it was also an open endorsement of the Igbo State Union by members of the Igbo Federal Union and the NCNC which it hoped would become a member of the future political Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo expressed similar sentiments when he argued that a necessary condition for Nigeria's political advancement was pan-ethnic unity, which of

course, presupposed the leadership of the westernized elite. He, in fact, advocated the right of ethnic nationalities to what he termed "home rule".[46]

According to Richard Sklar, another major reason for the inauguration of the Igbo State Union was the clash between educated Yoruba and Igbo leaders. This manifested itself most powerfully in the many published diatribes and virulence that were disturbingly ethnically chauvinistic, especially on the pages of the Azikiwe-owned *West African Pilot* and the Yoruba owned *Daily Service.*[47] For instance, the *West African Pilot* on September 9, 1948 declared that:

> *Henceforth, the cry must be one of battle against Egbe Omo Oduduwa, its leaders at home and abroad, uphill and down dale in the streets of Nigeria and in the residences of its advocates ...it is the enemy of Nigeria. It must be crushed to the earth.*[48]

However, this outburst was in reaction to Sir Oluwole Adeyemo's arguments in the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa Monthly Bulletin* of December 1, 1948, that:

> *We were bunched together by the British who named us Nigeria. We never knew the Ibo, but since we came to know them we have tried to be friendly and neigbourly ...we have tolerated enough from a class of Ibos and addle-brained Yoruba who have mortgaged their thinking cap to Azikiwe and his hirelings.* [49]

Lagos was Yorubaland and Western Nigeria was Yoruba-dominated. It was, therefore, not acceptable to the ethnic group that Azikiwe, a non-Yoruba, will hold sway in the area. Thus, the intemperate remarks, retaliatory outbursts and press wars, largely resulted from the apprehension of the Yoruba over the assertive and forceful nature of the Igbo in colonial Nigeria, especially following the emergence of Azikiwe on the political scene. Indeed, as Sklar observed, Awolowo's return from England in 1946 and his zealous drive to achieve Yoruba unity, gained the approval of many leading Yoruba who had viewed Azikiwe's meteoric political rise, militancy and popularity with everything but admiration.[50]

Kayode Olayode asserts that,

> *Yoruba nationalism arose from the intense Yoruba/Igbo rivalries between 1940 and 1947 when the leadership of the Yoruba in the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was directly challenged by the emergence of Azikiwe, who became the symbol of Igbo achievement and emancipation.*[51]

He argued that when the NYM lost its Igbo members and also collapsed, Awolowo and other Yoruba leaders concluded that the original idea of pan-Nigerian nationalism was not feasible. This, to an extent, informed their support for federalism and, according to him, "...led to the formation of an organization that would weld together the Yoruba-speaking people as a first practical step to national unity."[52] The organization, which was formed in London in 1948, became known as Egbe Omo Oduduwa. Both Sklar and Olayode agree that while the Azikiwe-led Igbo and the Awolowo-led Yoruba factions antagonized each other, both continued to seek Nigerian unity, albeit through different forums and ideas. Awolowo pioneered the the Egbe Omo Oduduwa as a practical step to national unity, while the Azikiwe side saw the Igbo State Union as a forerunner to an Igbo State in a united Nigeria.

The ugly situation of anti-Igbo sentiments in Lagos informed Eluwa's recommendation in early 1947 for the transfer of the Igbo Federal Union headquarters from Lagos to Port Harcourt. Although Enugu, Onitsha, and Aba, among others, were Igbo cities to which the Union's headquarters could have been moved, Port Harcourt had the advantage of being a seaport city, and many Igbo business interests were already developing around it. The Igbo were increasingly contributing in developing Lagos even in the midst of Yoruba hostilities. But with the continued tension and antagonism between them and the Yoruba, they sought to develop an alternative city to Lagos.

Igbo leaders realized that one advantage which Lagos had over Enugu, Aba and Onitsha was that it had a seaport. This was a facility that was available in Port Harcourt. Consequently, the Igbo developed a fervent interest in building Port Harcourt and shifting their business interests there. In the 1940s, Port Harcourt was unquestionably an Igbo city, and the Igbo were, without doubt, the dominant group in the city. Perhaps, the only problem was that Ikwere landlords considered themselves dominated by their non-Ikwere Igbo brothers. Also, it was reasoned that if located within Igboland, carrying out the Union's activities from Port Harcourt would be both easier and cost effective. The Union's leaders could easily travel to Igbo communities and get there in a shorter time than when they were travelling from Lagos. More importantly, the headquarters' new location brought the Union home to the grass roots and to the people who owned it and for whose interest it was formed, ab initio. The Union's officials, it was also reasoned, would not be in pains getting information across to the grass roots, getting feedback from them, as well as responding to their inquiries and demands.

When the Executive Committee of the Igbo Federal Union accepted Eluwa's recommendation to move the Union's headquarters to Port Harcourt, it also made arrangements to inaugurate the Igbo State Union during the first Igbo State Conference scheduled for Port Harcourt in December, 1948. Thus, against the background of Yoruba–Igbo hostility, transforming the Igbo Federal Union into the Igbo State Union, as well as establishing the pan-Igbo organisation's headquarters in the Igbo homeland, a pan-Igbo Conference was held in Port Harcourt in December, 1948. The Igbo State Union's National Executive Council also planned that the occasion would witness the foundation laying ceremony of the Igbo National College, Aba. The aim of the 1948 National Conference was "to organize the Ibo linguistic group into a political unit (state) in accordance with the NCNC freedom charter."[53]

The 1948 Port Harcourt Conference where the name "Igbo State Union" was coined and the body inaugurated, was well-attended by Igbo leaders and unions. According to Eluwa, delegates came from every part of Igboland and there was a large and impressive assemblage of Igbo people.[54] More and more Igbo personalities and groups that were previously not very active in the pan-Igbo movement attended, and the pan-Igbo organisation gained a wider membership and participation. Significantly, the likes of Azikiwe, Ibiam, and Mbadiwe, among others participated more actively, making themselves available to be elected as officials of the Union. Thus, the shift from Lagos to Port Harcourt did not only bring the Igbo State Union to Igboland, it also increased its relevance and awareness among the Igbo, and elicited and excited their participation and enthusiasm. With an ambitious programme and a well laid-out constitution, the Union, at the Port Harcourt Conference, elected persons deemed suitably qualified, competent and dedicated enough to run its affairs. Sharing common disabilities and aware of the many common elements in their heritage, the delegates to the Port Harcourt Conference needed to promptly elect the most important Igbo son on the Nigerian stage to lead the most important pan-Igbo organization in Nigeria—Nnamdi Azikiwe. The Conference produced the following individuals as the pioneer leaders of the Igbo State Union:

1. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe - President
2. Barr. A.C. Nwapa - Deputy President
3. Mr. Raymond A.Njoku - First Vice-President
4. Mr. M.O.Ajegbo - Second Vice-President
5. Mr. (later) Justice H.U. Kaine - Third Vice-President
6. Barr. (later Dr.) J.A. Wachukwu - Principal Secretary

7. Mr. B.O.N. Eluwa - Permanent Under-Secretary
8. Mr. M.I. Onwuka - Treasurer
9. Mr. (later Dr.) Nwafor Orizu - Political Adviser
10. Mr. Mbonu Ojike - Economic Adviser
11. Dr. Akanu Ibiam - Medical Adviser
12. Dr. Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe - Cultural Adviser
13. Mr. E.J. Oli - Educational Adviser[55]

The Igbo State Union hoped that such an array of Igbo intellectual stars would not only command public confidence but would also help to justify the Union and all it stood for.[56] As earlier stated, in the opening years of the colonial period the Igbo were behind the Yoruba educationally, politically and economically, and they considered themselves oppressed by the colonial government. For them, therefore, the surest way of escaping from these and other disabilities was through the adoption of the principle of self-determination.[57] This explains why the composition of the Executive Committee of the Igbo State Union had to be such that it would erase past injuries and disrespect, and assure hope for the future. In other words, the Union was formed on the basis of political and socio-economic expediencies and realities. It was one big forum for Igbo political cooperation between 1948 and 1966.

Although this pan-Igbo enthusiasm, as typified by the Union and its activities, was contingent upon the socio-economic and political changes of the period and a response to a conflictual situation that had colonial Nigeria as the ordering system, the Union was committed to a strong united Nigeria.[58] It had to be placed on a

faster moving and more embracing track with an eye, not just on Igbo ethnic advancement within Nigeria, but also on national integration and anti-colonial agitations. However, with the entrance of the political Azikiwe into the leadership position of the Igbo State Union, it would have been hard to totally insulate the body from Nigerian politics. Even where and when its activities and views were overtly non-political, critics were bound to see politics in them and make political interpretations out of every situation.

The election of Azikiwe as the first President of the Igbo State Union was more or less inevitable, since the Igbo saw him as their symbol of possibilities and great political, social and economic advancements.[59] Azikiwe's political career gave the Igbo a confident assertion that behind every terrible mask of misfortune lies the smiling countenance of prosperity. They had known the poignant injustice of subordination which colonial Nigeria meted out to them and other Nigerians Nothing, therefore, could have exerted a more revolutionizing psychological impact like the boldness of one of their own challenging the colonial administration.

Azikiwe and his crew had, in their individual capacities, risen in the ranks of society not only as politicians but also as educated elite, administrators, strategists, and anti-colonial nationalists. Most of them were educated in Europe and the United States and had interacted with leading black activists in the developed world. Azikiwe himself had a personal relationship with W.E.B. Dubois and a leading African-American attorney, Thoroughgood Marshal.[60] Mbadiwe was a prolific writer and speaker whose organisational exploits as a student in the United

States won him Eleanor Roosevelt's invitation to the White House. It was a big achievement for a black African to have been invited by the First Lady of the United States in the thick of racism in that country. As an undergraduate in Europe, Wachukwu was an honours student and a decorated orator of international standard, and like Nwapa and Njoku, he became a reputable lawyer on his return to Nigeria. While in the United States, Orizu founded the American Council on African Education, a body that focused on getting scholarship and tuition waivers for African students. Like Azikiwe, he was interested in journalism and publishing, teaming up with M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu to run the *West African Examiner* newspaper. It was, thus, obvious that these men had both the education and exposure to represent the Igbo family and take care of the internal organisation and dynamics of the Igbo State Union.

The Organization, Internal Structure, and Dynamics of the Igbo State Union

Although the Igbo State Union was established in 1948 with a working constitution, it was in 1951 that it produced its landmark constitution that stipulated the rules, structure as well as the aims and objectives with which it came to be identified. The constitution, which was ratified at the Union's 1951 Assembly held at Aba, was an improvement on the draft constitution which Eluwa had submitted to the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Igbo Federal Union in 1947. According to the 1951 constitution,[61] the aims and objectives of the Union were the following:

1. To devise ways and means whereby all the sons and daughters of Igboland, at home and abroad, were to be brought together under one union.

2. To promote cultural understanding among the various groups in Igboland at home and abroad.

3. To bring within the influence of the Union all Igbo men and women organizations at home and abroad;

4. To encourage educational progress of the Igbo at home and abroad.

5. To seek better understanding between the Igbo and other linguistic groups in Nigeria and beyond.[62]

While the first four aims and objectives looked at Igbo unity, cultural understanding and educational and general progress, the fifth focused on Nigerian integration and unity. No doubt, this constitution came at a time when Nigeria was witnessing multi-faceted ethnically-based political skirmishes. The framers of the document were interested in creating a better relationship between the Igbo and other Nigerians. As already discussed, Azikiwe, who on his return from the United States settled in Ghana and later Lagos, (from where he pursued his Nigerian agenda), had, on account being an Igbo, come under the attack of the Yoruba with whom he was working. The sour relationship between him and some Yoruba elite expectedly trickled down to the grass root, affecting interactions between the average Lagos-based Igbo and his Yoruba host even in the markets. Before the Azikiwe case in Lagos, other Nigerians were antagonizing the Igbo and increasingly becoming suspicious of their town and villages unions, especially in the North. According to Obinalli:

> *In a short time [after the 1930s], the Igbo became the second largest residents and property owners after the indigenous inhabitants in Northern Nigeria.... Northerners began to see them as outsiders occupying positions in the economy that rightfully belonged to the*

> *indigenous people. They saw the Igbo as being too ambitious and zealous in financial matters, resented the rapidity with which they acquired education and wealth, and envied the rate at which their population grew wherever they established themselves.*[63]

In 1921, while the census figures indicated that there were only 3,000 Igbo in Northern Nigeria, ten years later in 1931, the figure quadrupled to 12,000.[64] Between the 1940s and the 1950s, there was an explosion in Igbo population in Northern Nigeria. The about 12,000 people that in 1931 was the population of the Igbo in the entire North became their population in just Sabon Gari, Kano, a section of Kano inhabited by settler communities. This accounted for 59% of the population of Sabo Gari. The Yoruba, who hitherto dominated in the area, were second with a population of about 5,000 that accounted for 24% of the population. John Paden argues that in 1950, (a year before the 1951 Igbo Union constitution was introduced) the Igbo Union was, "...the major socio-political organization of the Sabon Gari."[65] He shows how the Igbo steadfastly identified with the Igbo State Union and how the Union, "...sustained, as a matter of priority, the provision of educational facilities that provided access into the employment of Kano."[66]

Jacinta Nwaka argues that, "...tension became imminent with the en masse movement of southerners into Kano", where Lord Lugard had promised the Sultan of Sokoto the protection of Islam.[67] This tension led to the creation of the Sabon-Gari community in the outskirts of Kano and many other attempts by both the local authority and the colonial office to suppress the rising influence of strangers,

especially the Igbo. Chief among such efforts was the restricting of non-Muslim stranger elements from holding property within the walled Kano City, and the imposition of fines on strangers who tried to circumvent the settlement policies. That notwithstanding, Nwaka writes that, "The settlers, especially the Igbo, made Sabon-Gari the beehive of economic activities in Kano", such that, "...its market established in 1918, had by 1940 reduced Kano main market to insignificance and squeezed the indigenes out of business."[68] No doubt, Kano indigenes did not applaud this development but blamed the Igbo for their economic loses. It is easy, therefore, to see why they resented the Igbo and the Igbo Union in Kano, suspecting every activity of the organization, no matter how lofty and developmental they appeared. Thus, when the Igbo Union, Kano, established schools in the town, the indigenous people were not comfortable with it.

Although the provision of educational facilities was a positive development and no government or people will argue otherwise, in Kano in the 1940s and 1950s, it was yet another reason to antagonize the Igbo and mark the activities of the Igbo Union out for suspicion and scrutiny. Of course, when the Union provided educational facilities to train young Igbo boys and girls, it in turn empowered them with the certificates and knowledge to get employed in the Kano Civil Service and private sector. This was, sometimes, at the expense of the indigenous Kano people who desired those jobs but lacked the requisite skills and educational qualifications to clinch and perform them. Expectedly, the indigenous people hated the Igbo and the Igbo Union, Kano, for this. Even government authorities in Kano were uncomfortable with what the Igbo Union, Kano, was doing with the education of their wards.

According to the 'Kano Twenty Years Plan', the Igbo Union, Kano, made provision for a variety of activities, including well-run and staffed primary schools and one secondary school. While accepting that the Igbo Union was performing a

'valuable function' that was "probably forced upon the community through lack of educational facilities provided by the local educational authority", writers of the Plan still feared and disapproved the school project.[69] Thus, on the same document in which the authorities conceded that there was a shortage in Kano's educational facilities and the Igbo Union was filling the vacuum, they also feared that the activities of the Igbo Union was 'disadvantageous'. This contradiction asks the question what the reason for fearing and condemning the Igbo Union was. Was building schools to educate one's wards, where the general facilities available were not enough to satisfy that end, disintegrative or 'disadvantageous' If the reason for condemning the Igbo Union was fear of the Igbo getting educated above their hosts or that Igbo children would take up employment in Kano at the expense of the less educated indigenous people, should the Igbo Union be condemned for that? Obviously, the Union did not stand on the way of the local authorities or other ethnic groups who desired or aspired to build schools; rather it showed an example that deserved both copying and commendation.

However, because of the growing fear of the 'meteoric rise'of the Igbo, it was understandable why "performing" this "valuable function" was suspicious and "disadvantageous". It explains why the Igbo Union in Kano, while not doing anything disintegrative, was accused of doing just that and given knocks for performing a "valuable function." Just as in Kano, the Igbo were found guilty in many non-Igbo cities in Nigeria not for any crime or civil disobedience but for aspiring to develop on their own, sometimes faster than the indigenous peoples. This was the predicament in which the Igbo found themselves, and it is a veritable explanation for why they sought to develop Port Harcourt as an alternative, if not a rival city to Lagos.

From inception, the Igbo State Union's leaders understood this anti-Igbo aspect of Nigerian politics. Consequently, they took steps to illustrate that the Igbo

and the Igbo State Union were, indeed, working to develop and integrate Nigeria. That was why they included the principle of integration in the Igbo State Union's 1951 Constitution. Also, the Igbo understood the animosities against them and were, of course, fast in embracing the Igbo State Union through individual and group membership.

Igbo State Union membership was open to all Igbo unions or associations and people at home in Igboland and abroad in such places as Lagos, Ibadan and Kano, among others. There were essentially two kinds of membership, namely the Registered and the Nominal . The first consisted of any Igbo union within or outside Igboland comprising a mixed community of Igbo people, and of the towns, clans and Districts comprising the indigenous people of such towns, clans or Districts. Each of such Union paid a registration fee of £2.2 (the equivalent of about five hundred and fifty Naira at the 1992 exchange rate). Membership was also open to every town, clan or district union on payment of a registration fee of £10.10 (or the equivalent of about two thousand five hundred Naira at the 1992 exchange rate). Examples of such unions were Asaba for town union, Ututu for Clan Union and Northern Ngwa for District Union. Irrespective of its category, any union desiring membership of the Igbo State Union had to apply to the Executive Committee through the secretariat, remitting with the application letter, the stipulated registration fee.

All unregistered Igbo Unions, Town, Clan, or District unions were regarded as nominal members of the Igbo State Union. It was also expected that a union should fall into any of three categories—A, B, or C,—and was entitled to be represented at Igbo State Assemblies by four, three, and two representatives, respectively. Each town, clan or district was entitled to be represented by six representatives, and every member unit paid an annual contribution equivalent to its grade or category as determined by the Assembly. Finally, each member unit forwarded to the

Executive Committee of the Union a report of its internal activities annually. This was done through the secretariat on the first week of every November and was intended to build a better understanding of Igbo Union activities across the board. Individual members of the various units were automatically regarded as registered or nominal members of the Igbo State Union. The membership structure of the Union was such that it united a multitude of voluntary associations which sought to achieve civic welfare in both the urban areas of Nigeria and at home in Igboland. This, perhaps, explains the constant reference to unions at "home or abroad" in the constitution.

Article Four of the constitution entrusted the government of the Union to the Igbo State Assembly. The Assembly was, therefore, the highest organ of the Union and decided broad questions of policy, considering whatever matter the Executive Committee referred to it. The Assembly, as earlier mentioned, was attended by representatives of the various unions affiliated to the Igbo State Union on the basis of seats allotted to such member unions following the categories to which they belonged. Attendance at the Assembly's sessions normally varied between two hundred and five hundred persons, though on one occasion at least, about a thousand persons attended.[70] Meetings of the Assembly were held twice yearly, in June and December. The Executive Committee decided the time and venue for such meetings and gave at least two months' notice to the groups and individuals that were expected to attend.

As the governing body of the Igbo State Union, the Assembly had immense powers entrusted to it. Not only had it the right to amend, repeal or remake the constitution; it could also elect or remove any officer from office and discipline any Igbo man, woman or member unit. The constitution also assigned to the Assembly the responsibility of intiating any action or series of actions and programmes that will help the Union to achieve its objectives. In addition, it could

impose levies on member units or individual members and carry out other duties not expressly stated in the constitution, as long as such were in the interest of the Union. The Assembly also governed the Executive Committee of the Union and forwarded to the Committee for further consideration, any decision it deemed expedient.

Every decision of the Igbo State Assembly was final and binding on all the affiliated unions. To ensure orderliness at its meetings, no person or group of persons other than the elected representatives of the member units or the executive members of the Union were to be the president or chairman of the Assembly. Persons thus admitted were allowed to participate in the deliberations but had no voting rights. Furthermore, the Executive Committee had the power to appoint standing or sub-committees and to invest such committees with powers which the Committee deemed necessary or advisable. It also defined the duties of such committees, and its decisions or orders had the force of law and were binding on all members and member units.

The Union's Executive Committee was charged with the responsibility of the general administration of the Union's business in the interval between every two Annual Assemblies. The Committee was made up of forty persons, with every Division in Igboland being represented. The constitution empowered the Committee to co-opt members into its fold as it deemed necessary. Such co-opted members had voting rights. The Executive Committee could call a Special Assembly if the need arose. At least two weeks' notice of such a Special Assembly had to be given to all member units, and where the interests of the Union or its members were not immediately endangered, all matters to be considered by the Special Assembly had to be submitted to the member units before the assembly date. This was to enable them give instructions to their representatives.

Like the biannual assemblies, the time and venue of any Special Assembly was determined by the Executive Committee, which also had to have an advance copy of the names of the representatives of each member unit to the Assembly. The Executive Committee met at least once a month at such times and places as they or the President of the Union deemed necessary. In all, the Assembly was organized along democratic lines, characteristic of the traditional Igbo political orientation. Significantly, the Executive Committee eased the burdens of the Assembly as it managed the day-to-day affairs of the Union, subject to the final decisions of the Assembly.

The constitution provided for Principal or Honorary Officers of the Igbo State Union, with specific functions attached to their offices. Article Five stipulated the various categories of Honorary Officers, their duties and how they were to be elected, as well as their tenure of office. The offices included the President, the Vice-President, the Principal Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer, the Legal Adviser, and two Auditors. The General Assembly elected these officers and thirty-one others who together constituted the Executive Committee of the Igbo State Union. The tenure of each Executive Committee was for three years, though the constitution empowered the Assembly to remove or suspend any executive member found to be inefficient. However, retiring members of the Executive Committee were eligible for re-election.

The head of both the Executive Committee and the General Assembly was the President of the Union. He presided over all the meetings of both bodies and signed all vouchers and orders on treasury. He was not a first-among-equals type of president. Thus, he signed the vouchers and countersigned all Assembly summons and important correspondences under the close watch, especially of the Principal Secretary, who also appended his own signature. The President performed all other duties pertaining to his office, such as forming a part of the

General Assembly Quorum as well as that of the Executive Committee. His absence and that of the Vice-President or the Principal Secretary could handicap the Union's meetings. The second most senior officer of the Union after the President was the Vice-President. He deputized for the President and acted for him in his absence. However, in the absence of both officers, the Executive Committee could elect one of its members to preside over its meetings.

The bulk of the administrative responsibilities of the Igbo State Union rested on the shoulders of the Principal Secretary. He attended all the meetings of the Executive Committee and the Assembly and made and kept the minutes of such meetings. It was his duty to conduct all correspondences as directed; notified officers of their appointments, and prepared the order of business for each meeting of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly. In addition, the Principal Secretary, together with the President and Treasurer, signed all monetary withdrawals from banks. He kept a list of names and addresses of member units and their respective representatives, and presented an Annual Report (with its appendix, that is, the Treasurer's Balance Sheet fully certified by the Auditors) at the Annual Assemblies. Finally, the Principal Secretary supervised the staff and Secretariat of the Union with the advice of the Executive Committee, as well as surrendering to the President all records, files and other property of the Union in his possession, should he resign or be dismissed. The Principal Secretary performed these duties under the direction of the President.

Duties assigned to the Financial Secretary of the Igbo State Union included the collection of all monies due from member units and/ or due to the Union. He remitted same to the Treasurer within seven days and issued receipts for all the monies he received. He also obtained receipts for monies he remitted to the Treasurer or any other person, as the case may be. Furthermore, he was constitutionally expected to keep a true and accurate account of all receipts of

money and all payments of same into the Treasury. Finally, the Financial Secretary reported cases of accumulated debts to the Executive Committee so that reminders could be issued to defaulters or any other appropriate action taken. On demand, he submitted his books for routine inspection by any officer of the Union or the Committee as a whole.

The next important Honorary Officer of the Union was the Treasurer. He received from the Financial Secretary all monies due to the Union, and deposited same in an approved bank within seven days. He also issued receipts for monies which his office received, and kept accurate accounts of all the Union's monetary transactions. Although he received the monies, he could not pay any bill except on a written order signed by the President and the Principal Secretary, and he had to give a proper income and expenditure account on an annual basis. In addition, he also prepared a balance sheet of the assets and liabilities of the Union annually, which had to be authenticated by auditors. Finally, the Treasurer, together with the President and the Principal Secretary, signed all Union withdrawals from the bank and submitted his books for inspection by any officer of the Union or the Executive Committee as a whole on demand. In order to ensure the effective execution of its set objectives, the Union also made provision on how its funds were to be obtained. Article Seven of the constitution listed the major sources of funds to include registration fees, levies or assessments on members and/or member units, donations, collections, and such other sources as may be determined by the Executive Committee or the Assembly.

The Igbo State Union also had a quasi-Board of Trustees. This was made up of three members who were also members of the Executive Committee. The care of all the Union's movable and immovable property was vested in the Board of Trustees, which was appointed by the Executive Committee. The Trustees were incorporated and had a common seal which was fixed to all documents that were

required by law to be executed under seal. The three Trustees held all property of the Union, subject to the direction of the Executive Committee, and each of them had to sign all documents to which the common seal of the Union was fixed, as required by law. The right to remove a Trustee was vested in the Executive Committee which, on grounds of infirmity, insanity, bankruptcy, removal from Nigeria or for any other reason which in its opinion rendered such a person unfit, unable or unsuitable to hold the office of the Union's Trustee, could exercise that power. Moreover, in the event of the death, resignation or removal of a Trustee, the Executive Committee could fill the vacancy so created. Lastly, the Principal Secretary was authorized to keep an inventory of all Union property, movable or immovable, real or personal, and had to make it available on demand, to the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees.[71]

ENDNOTES

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2. Kenneth Little, *"The Role of Voluntary Associations in West African Urbanization,"* American Anthropologist, 59, (1957): 580.
3. Elliot Skinner, *"Strangers in West African Societies"*, Africa, Vol. 33, No. 4, (1963), 309.
4. Stephen O. Imoagene, *"Postwar Ethnic Relations in Nigeria"*, in Pierre L. van den Berghe (ed.), Race and Ethnicity in Africa, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), 154.
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9. Humphrey N. Nwosu, *Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension publishers, 1979), 21.
10. P. C. Lloyd, A. L. Mabogunje and B. Awe (eds.), *The City of Ibadan: A Symposium on its Structure and Development,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 109.
11. See David Parkin, *Neighbours and Nationals in an African City Ward,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
12. See Robert B.Lake, *"Foreword"*, in Richard Shanmon, The Crisis of Imperialism, (London: Hart Davis, MacGibon Ltd., 1974).
13. Kenneth O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885* (London: 1958), 28. In his words, "...the most important factor conditioning Ibo history in the nineteenth century and in our time is land hunger. Hence the Ibos pressing against limited land and resources had of necessity to seek other avenues of livelihood (outside their ethnic homeland)." See also Paul Mercier, *"The Meaning of Tribalism in Black Africa,"* in Van den Berghe,

Race and Ethnicity, 24 and Margery Perham, *"Nigeria's Civil War*," Africa Contemporary Record, (1968-9): 3.

14. The Hausa-Fulani were the earliest settlers of Sabon Gari between 1917 and 1920. See Lloyd et al (eds.), *The City of Ibadan,* 93-116.

15. Kenneth Little, *"The Study of Social Change in British West Africa,"* Africa 23 (1953): 278. According to Little, "The social and economic obligations of kinship as well as political allegiance and jural rights and status, which are also tied up with kinship, keep alive a person's attachment to this native town or village."

16. Richard I. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emerging Nation,* (Lagos: Nok Publishers International, 1983), 16.

17. Nwosu, *Political Authority*, 23.

18. Paul Mercier, *"The Meaning of Tribalism,"*158.

19. Mercier, *"The Meaning of Tribalism,"* 158.

20. 20. J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Benin City: Brobourg and Wistrom Publishers, 1986), 224.

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22. Audrey Chapman Smock, "*NCNC and Ethnic Unions in Biafra," J.M.A.S* 7, 1, (1969): 32.

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25. Chukwuemeka Onwubu, *"Ethnic Political Integration and National Development: The Igbo Diaspora in Nigeria,"* Journal of Modern African Studies, 13, 3, (1975): 409.

26. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, 340. Although Coleman posits that the Union was formed in 1935 to welcome Dr. Akanu Ibiam back from Europe as the first Igbo Medical doctor, Mr. B.O.N. Eluwa, a principal actor in both the Igbo Federal Union and the Igbo State Union argues that 1935 was the date for the formation of the Union in Lagos, consequent upon the return of Dr. S. E. Onwu as the first Igbo medical doctor in 1936. (From an interview with Eluwa, July 13, 1993, Aladinma Housing Estate, Owerri, Imo State).

27. Cives Agboris, *"Letters to the Editor,"* Nigerian Daily Telegraph, February 3, (1933), 6.

28. Agboris, *Letters to the Editor*, 6.
29. Simon Ottenberg, *"Igbo Receptivity to Change"* in William R. Bascom and M.J. Herskovits (eds.), Continuity and Change in African Culture (Chicago: University Press, 1959), 103-143.
30. See Simon Ottenberg *Igbo Receptivity to Change",* 340.
31. V.C.I. Anene, (former Principal Secretary of the Igbo State Union) from a paper on "Reminiscences on the Igbo State Union", December 1987.
32. B.O.N. Eluwa (former Assistant General Secretary, Igbo Union, Lagos) in a discussion with the author at Aladimma Housing Estate, Owerri, July 13 1992.
33. Coleman, *Background to Nationalism,* 340. The author asserts that the Federal union aimed at building five secondary schools in Igboland, but Eluwa gave the number of schools envisaged as thirty. In addition, an Igbo National Bank was also to be established, according to Eluwa.
34. Interview with Chief Eluwa, July 13, 1992.
35. B.O.N. Eluwa, *"I Have Been Wonderfully Led: The Retrospection of B.O.N. Eluwa, Snr. at 71"* (70th Birthday Anniversary Programme), 7. Also in an interview with Eluwa, July 13 1992 and July 21, 1992, at Aladinma, Owerri.
36. Interview with Eluwa, July 13, 1992.
37. Coleman, *Background to Nationalism,* 221
38. See also Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 54-55. In his words, "Notwithstanding his constant affirmation of non-tribal African values, he (Dr. Azikiwe) could not be unmindful of the fact that he was identified by his people (The Ibo) with their own national pride. His career typified their growing assertiveness in Nigerian affairs...."
39. See Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1964) 189.
40. Eluwa, interview.
41. Eluwa, interview.
42. Eluwa, interview.
43. Eluwa, interview.
44. *West African Pilot*, January 4, 1949.
45. Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber Publishers, 1947), 35.
46. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 70.

47. *West African Pilot*, September 9, 1948.
48. Oluwole Alakija, *Egbe Omo Oduduwa Monthly Bulletin*, December 1, 1948.
49. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 68. See also Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, 346). Nevertheless, there were still some Yoruba admirers and followers of Dr. Azikiwe, those who were regarded as "addle-brained" by Sir Adeyemo.
50. See Kayode Olayode, *"Self-Determination, Ethno-Nationalism and Conflict in Nigeria,"* in IFRA Conference on conflict and Violence in Nigeria, Clément Boutillier, (ed), Proceedings of the 2009 Conference in Zaria.
51. Olayode, "Self-Determination"
52. *West African Pilot*, January 4, 1949.
53. Eluwa, interview.
54. See *West African Pilot* of January 4, 1949. Mr. Eluwa, however, listed Dr. Nsugbe as the Assistant Permanent Under-Secretary and Sir Louis Mbanefo as the Legal Adviser, respectively, of the Igbo State Union.
55. Mr. Eluwa's *"I Have Been Wonderfully Led"*, 14.
56. Ugbana Okpu, *Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigerian Politics, 1969-1965* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1977),
57. Ugbana Okpu, *Ethnic Minority Problems,* 99.
58. James O'Cornell, *"Political Integration: The Nigerian Case*," in Arthur Hazlewood (ed.), African Integration and Disintegration (London: O.U.P., 1967), 145.
59. Later in 1960 when Azikiwe was inaugurated as Governor-General of Nigeria in Lagos, Thoroughgood Marshal was invited to attend the occasion.
60. This constitution is not the original draft which Eluwa submitted to the Executive Committee of the defunct Igbo Federal Union while proposing the transformation from the Igbo Federal Union to the Igbo State Union. The draft was unfortunately lost during the Nigeria-Biafra war. The copy enclosed here in the appendix was given at Aba on March 24, 1951 and amended on June 20, 1954.
61. See Article Two of the Igbo State Union Constitution of 1951.
62. Obinalli, *"American Foreign Policy,"* 43.
63. John Padem, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (New York: ACLS Humanities E-Book, 2008), 315.
64. Padem, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, 320.

65. Padem, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*.
66. Jacinta Chiamaka Nwaka, *"Dynamics of Conflict in Kano: Response to a Threatened Identity"*. (Lecture, Peace Research Capacity Building Workshop, United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 16-20, 2009).
67. Nwaka, *"Dynamics of Conflict"*.
68. Padem, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, 321.
69. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 460.
70. All information relating to the structure of the Igbo State Union is on the basis of the analysis of its Constitution (see Appendix).

CHAPTER THREE

ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT OF THE IGBO STATE UNION

The idea behind an examination of the impact of the Igbo State Union seems to relate more to the requirements of analysis than to the problems of conceptualization. In other words, it is considered more important to see the issue as a sort of shift from subjective to objective analysis. This is better than giving

spurious currency to some arguments that bother on nothing short of noisy vulgarity. One's idea of the good and the bad is usually a function of time and circumstances, and in most cases, any conceptualization of both an organization and a group is reinforced by the psychological weight of prejudice.

Put in clearer words, it is understandable but hardly warranted to see the Igbo State Union either as a paper tiger[1] or as an instrument that was employed by the Igbo to frustrate the so-called 'legitimate aspirations' of the ethnic minorities in Eastern Nigeria.[2] The latter argument does nothing more than suggest that the Union was a disintegrative organization, while the first insists that the Union was neither integrative nor disintegrative; it was simply never there. These views do not seem to espouse the cause of stringent rationality. On the contrary, they appear to exhibit ignorance of the Igbo State Union and what it stood for.

As earlier stated, one's perception of events is more or less the product of time and unfolding circumstances. These notwithstanding, if one bears in mind the microcosmic unity in diversity of Nigeria today, it would not be too difficult to accommodate the unity in diversity which the Igbo exhibited during the period 1936 to 1966 and why in some cases the activities of the Igbo State Union were seen to be excessive. This prima facie unity, as this book will show later, is a cogent fact, which was based on some features of the life of the Igbo--existential, cultural, linguistic, geographical, economic, and so on. However, this is not a self-justificatory chapter designed to exalt the Union and its activities between 1936 and 1966. Instead, it is an exploratory incursion into an otherwise misunderstood organization. The aim is to present a more dispassionate and rational examination of what the Union stood for while it lasted.

POLITICAL IMPACT

Pan-Igbo Unity

There is no doubt that prior to colonial rule, the Igbo lacked any large-scale political, economic, or socio-cultural organization. They were too close historically to feel altogether apart, yet too widely scattered and differentiated to compose one polity. Indeed, until the late 1920s and early 1930s, the acceptance of an Igbo identity was a distant dream. It was only during these years that educated Igbo elements began to identify themselves as Igbo. The idea later spread to the villages. According to Audrey Smock, *"The State Union... originated just as people began to proclaim their allegiance to this inclusive community.*[3]

A major impact of the Union, therefore, is the emergence of and consolidation of Igbo ethnic identity in colonial Nigeria. Prior to its formation, the Igbo had no compelling traditional loyalty beyond their various villages. Except for a few places like Onitsha, there was a conspicuous absence of any large political grouping that could unite the Igbo and provide them with an all-embracing unity of social structure and culture.[4] Each small village or community was an independent entity, and cherished and defended this independence with an almost fanatical passion. Political influence within these villages was shared between the elders, wealthy and powerful individuals and such voluntary and compulsory institutions as age grade associations, cults, hierarchical title guilds and secret societies, among others. In other words, traditional Igbo society entrusted secular leadership in groups rather than in a few individuals.

However, the advent of the British and the concomitant migration of people from the Igbo hinterland to the new urban centres of Nigeria changed the outlook of those Igbo who left the confines of their small villages for the cities. Because of the impersonal nature of urban life and the fact that one had to survive, it became imperative for the new migrants to redefine themselves when they could not readily come across other persons from their own villages in the towns. This new redefinition, according to Immanuel Wallenstein, naturally corresponded to some

linguistic or geographical unit.[5] The Igbo State Union was, without doubt, the one organization that enabled the Igbo redefinition to have meaning and relevance, for although the new migrants identified basically with ethnic associations that were less inclusive, the Igbo State Union, nevertheless, afforded most urban Igbo dwellers the opportunity of coming together as one Igbo people. In the words of M. M. Green:

> *...the Ibo feel the bonds between them most closely when they are confronted by foreigners. Two men from whatever part of the Ibo-speaking country when they meet in Lagos or in London will call themselves brothers ...At home however, people will count themselves as belonging to their village group, will feel themselves intimately members of their village, will recognize the neighbouring village group as people with whom they trade...*[6]

In the same way, although the various Igbo ethnic associations may not have been conscious of the existence of each other, the formation of the Igbo State Union brought them together under one umbrella, their differences notwithstanding. In fact, as illustrated in Chapter Two, membership of the Igbo State Union was open to all such associations without any sort of discrimination.

It is not illogical, therefore, to argue that the experience which the Igbo gained in organising and operating the Igbo State Union somehow influenced and eased their emergence as the most politically vocal and active group in colonial Nigeria. The Igbo State Union, like the traditional Igbo political system, was egalitarian and democratic in its membership and structure. Thus, when the Indirect Rule System was introduced, it became quite unworkable in Igboland because it tended to concentrate powers in the hands of one individual - the Warrant Chief.[7] Despite the many interpretations of its activities and programme, the Igbo State Union helped to strengthen many Igbo ethnic associations by

sustaining the Igbo identity and their revered republicanism. Those elements in the traditional political culture that were considered relevant to modern political development were harnessed by the Union and its affiliates on behalf of the development of the Igbo at home and abroad. According to Smock:

> *This nexus transformed traditional communities to make them more consonant with modern institutions and modified the modern institutions to make them more meaningful to individuals operating primarily within the confines of the traditional societies.*[8]

In particular, the new educated and acculturated Igbo opposed the colonial administrative arrangement, especially the Indirect Rule System. Since there was never a real central authority in pre-colonial Igboland, the Igbo State Union and its affiliates, as well as the bulk of the Igbo population, tended to regard the Native Authority System as an alien institution, even when they were composed of Africans. The British colonial officials were themselves not ignorant of the contradictions between the political system they introduced and what used to be in Igboland. Thus, on March 31, 1947, the Resident Commissioner for Port Harcourt, H.L.M. Butcher, in a letter to Sir Bernard Carr, the Secretary of the Eastern Provinces, observed that:

> *The strength of the unions lies in the fact that they are institution (sic) devised by the people themselves. The weakness of the Councils at any level higher than village or perhaps group councils is that they are our creation.*[9]

He, therefore, suggested that one way of getting rid of this weakness was by grafting the union organization into the Native Authority system.[10]

These Igbo attitudes to colonial rule were novel, considering that the people involved were devoid of any pre-colonial political organization on a scale as large

as which existed among the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani, the two other major groups in the country. This lack of a precise Igbo political structure was not a handicap to the emergence of the Igbo State Union and the many other less-embracing associations, and their subsequent political maturity and astuteness. By bringing together the most educated, wealthy and influential Igbo people under one umbrella, the Union played a no mean role in sensitizing the Igbo to their potentials as a group to reckon with in the political development of Nigeria. It not only encouraged the evolution of a new spirit of unity and cooperative effort among the educated Igbo, it also made possible a high degree of participation in its affairs by the many local communities who sent representatives to the Union's meeting.

Leadership Training and Political Development of Nigeria

Furthermore, the Union was a veritable ground for leadership training and for producing candidates for the running of political Nigeria. In the opinion of Joseph Gugler and William G. Flanagan, this had to be so because:

> *The experience of running an organization and negotiating with other parties, the ready clientele of rank and file and the connections established with other leaders, furnished the basis for the career of many a politician.*[11]

Thus, no less than nine of the thirteen key officers of the Igbo State Union elected at the inaugural meeting Port Harcourt in 1948 rose to occupy important political positions at various levels of government in the First Republic. For instance, Nnamdi Azikiwe, the President of the Igbo State Union and the NCNC, became the Premier of the Eastern Region and later Governor-General of Nigeria; A.C. Nwapa (who was the Union's first Deputy President) became the Central Minister of Commerce, and R.A. Njoku (who was the First Vice-President of the Union) later

became a Federal Minister, while M.O. Ajegbo, (the Union's Second Vice-President) rose to occupy the office of the Attorney–General of the Eastern Region. Others were H.U. Kaine who was the Union's Third Vice-President and later became a Federal Judge, J.A. Wachukwu, the Union's Principal Secretary who became Chief Whip and Secretary of the NCNC, Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives and a Federal Minister; B. O. N. Eluwa, who was the Union's Permanent Under-Secretary was later an executive with the then Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. In the same vein, other principal officers of the Igbo State Union like Mbonu Ojike, E. I. Oli and K. O. Mbadiwe, rose to become Regional and Federal Ministers respectively, while M.I. Onwuka and Nwafor Orizu, respectively, became Political Adviser and Federal Senator/Senate President, respectively. Akanu Ibiam became the principal of the Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar, Chairman of the then University College, Ibadan, and later, Governor of the then Eastern Region.[12]

Political leadership, more often than not, is nurtured by participation in non-professional community-oriented programmes and organizations. It is there that potential leaders learn the rudiments of human relations and management which are later utilized in national politics. Also, through participation and interaction in communal associations, individuals are enabled to acquire greater understanding of the social and psychological make-up of both their colleagues and followers, including how they express their values and attitudes. Thus, in pursuing its goals, the leaders of any given organization have to take cognizance of the reactions of those they lead. That is why there is a need to reach an agreement about goals that are understood by major constituents.

Furthermore, unless the leadership is committed to the goals of the organization, it might end up generating problems that may not necessarily have any relationship with the original goal of the said organization.[13] In addition, the

position of a leader in any organization, especially those with political leanings and aspirations, demands that the leader must be willing to use his experience and resources, both material and social, to influence not only community decisions and actions, but also to enable him serve as a central figure in an alliance of networks, which in turn would determine the kind of support he can mobilize in time of political competition.[14]

Thus, the complexity of organizational structure and variety of levels within which the Igbo State Union was based prepared the principal officers for subsequent involvement in national politics. Put in other words, the intricacies involved in making such an all-inclusive union like the Igbo State Union to be active, especially in championing the Igbo cause for a share in the colonial system's limited resources, could not have failed to serve as a good training ground for potential leaders. This is not to say that the Union secured tickets for later assignments for its officers who went into politics. Rather, the experience gained in running and organizing the Union certainly imbued them with the confidence and commitment to render services of a more political nature to their fatherland when occasions demanded.

A strong case can, therefore, be made of the importance which the experience in communal service had in the future political roles and responsibilities performed by those former officials of the Union who later came to national political limelight. In the words of Smock:

> *By virtue of their urban experience and usually greater education, the leaders of the ethnic unions viewed politics in a wider perspective than most other members of the community at home. They had the political skills needed for operating within the modern political system, which enabled them to gain advantages in the form of political offices.*[15]

For the likes of Azikiwe, Nwapa, Ajegbo, Mbadiwe, Ojike, and Orizu, among others, the political skills they acquired in the course of running the Igbo State Union became very useful in their political careers. The emphasis of the Union on welfare and social responsibilities rather than individualism as well as the Igbo ethic and orientation of an individual as the brother's keeper, therefore reinforced in these leaders of the Igbo State Union the importance of the common cultural heritage and the need to uphold and defend same within the context of a united Nigeria.

Relationship with the NCNC

Another key aspect of the Union's political importance that has been misunderstood and maligned in some circles is its relationship with the NCNC. The relationship between the two bodies alarmed leaders of other Nigerian groups, more so when membership and official positions overlapped in the two organizations. However, it has to be stressed and strongly too, that although the Igbo State Union (especially the Igbo Union in Lagos) was a strong supporter of the NCNC in the mid- and late 1940s, this alliance was not intended to facilitate Igbo domination of other Nigerian peoples. Indeed, as Coleman has argued, the Igbo State Union was everything but political until 1948 when Igbo-Yoruba relationship soured[16]. This compelled the leaders of the Union to convert it into a quasi-political organization to, at least, ensure that the Igbo were not politically marginalized in colonial Nigeria.

Moreover, nothing should be seen as being fundamentally wrong in the Igbo identifying more with the NCNC which, during the period under consideration, was merely a political movement. The NCNC only later become a political party, in the real sense of the word, in the 1950s when the elective principle became firmly entrenched in Nigerian politics. Before this time, however, the symbol of Igbo potentials for achievement, Azikiwe, was the leader of both the NCNC and

the Igbo State Union. Thus, it should be understandable why the Igbo rallied solidly behind the NCNC. After all, it was led by their son, and ethnicity, all over the world, is both a cultural and a political phenomenon, operating in every political situation.

In Nigeria, the dawn of party politics consequent upon the regionalization of the country by the 1951 Macpherson constitution made it largely inevitable for the Igbo State Union to become an indispensable channel of communication to urban voters and thence to the rural dwellers. The NCNC, being the only pan-Nigerian political party, easily attracted the highly cosmopolitan and pan-Nigerian Igbo urban dwellers who in turn influenced the mass of the rural dwellers. In essence, therefore, much as it fits to argue that the assumed extension of Igbo ethnic identity to the NCNC more or less reflected the inevitability of the need for a political party to gain the support of a major segment of the population, it is also true that one major factor that influenced Igbo identification with and support for the NCNC was the need for a united Nigeria. The Igbo, as already noted, were very cosmopolitan, lived and invested economically and otherwise in every urban area in Nigeria and, of course, desired nothing but a national political atmosphere that encouraged integration at all levels and spheres in the country. An integrated Nigeria was the best alternative for their entrepreneurship, and while joining a political party, it is doubtful they will join a party that had a regional outlook and spread. If the NCNC was the only party with that spread and outlook, it logically follows that it was also the political party that will appeal most to the Igbo population.

As an organization, the Igbo State Union could not prevent its affiliates from supporting the NCNC even if it tried to. Such an attempt would have even threatened members' loyalty to the Union. Although some non-Igbo unions and voluntary organizations such as the Urhobo Renascent Convention and the Warri

Peoples Party were also affiliated to the NCNC,[17] it was the Igbo State Union's support that somehow produced an ethnic renaissance of a people who shared very little identity in the traditional context. It was also the Union's affiliation with the party that has generated both controversial and heated debates in Nigeria's academic, political, social, and media circles.

Furthermore and as earlier stated in Chapter Two, Igbo re-assertion in the colonial urban settings was inevitable and it found its most vocal expressions in the Igbo State Union and later the NCNC. Along with the Igbo need for re-assertion was also their quest for a united and well integrated Nigeria, and the NCNC provided the platform to pursue those ends. Though interpretations may vary, it is hard to argue that a people who lived and built their lives and families in every section of Nigeria would aspire for anything less than the integration of those sections within the context of a united country. It is also hard to argue that the Igbo State Union, the NCNC and the relationship between the two posed a threat to integration in Nigeria. As already noted, the relationship was because the Igbo people, the Igbo State Union and the NCNC had, among others, one major principle in common - the integration of Nigeria.

At the dawn of independence and up to its proscription in 1966, the Igbo State Union responded to the new forms of political competition which the departing British colonial regime had created. The exit of the British created greater inter-ethnic rivalries and competition, and recourse to ethnic identities became more frequent. Cultural symbols came to be adopted by various groups, and ethnicism continued to be used as the ideological tool in this competition. [18]
In addition, stereotypes of the various ethnic groups which had been created during the colonial era, were sustained after independence. Sometimes, the negative impressions which Nigerians had of each other's ethnic group resulted in verbal attacks and abuses, and these, in turn, heightened inter-ethnic tensions.

The reaction of the Union to anti-Igbo sentiments was to defend the people who were primarily its constituents. Thus, in 1964, it published about two pamphlets, namely, "Nigerian Disunity: the Guilty Ones," and "One North or One Nigeria". This was in addition to the many rebuttals which it released to the press. The pamphlets not only countered the anti-Igbo diatribes in the Northern and Western Regions, but also blamed other Nigerians for trying to dismember Nigeria. According to "Nigeria Disunity: The Guilty Ones":

> *In some places the hostile attitude of the Northern Nigerian Authorities against the Ibos has led to the termination of the appointment of Ibos under the (Local) Native Authority Service, the* termination *of their contracts prematurely, and the withdrawal of their titles to landholding and business premises.*[19]

Furthermore, on June 1965, the then President of the Igbo State Union, Z. C. Obi, addressed a meeting of the Union and observed that there appeared to be a conspiracy and a carefully laid-out plan to reduce the Igbo to second-class citizens in Nigeria, if not to outrightly annihilate them.[20] He also led a nine-man delegation to meet the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to protest the marginalization and harassment of the Igbo in the Northern and Western Regions. The delegation implored Balewa to use his good offices to rectify the situation. The leaders of the Union also reiterated their faith in the continued unity of Nigeria. Finally, they advised the Igbo both within and outside Nigeria to always remain law-abiding and to be dedicated advocates of Nigerian unity.[21]

In 1965 too, the Igbo State Union, had in reaction to a lengthy congratulatory letter to Dr. S. O. Biobaku by the Action Group in his capacity as the "successor" to Professor Eni Njoku (the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos), sent a letter to the Prime Minister. In the said letter, the Union called on

the Prime Minister to ensure that Professor Eni Njoku was reinstated as the Vice-Chancellor in line with the decision of the University's Senate which had been overruled by the Governing Council.[22] Indeed, post-colonial national politics in Nigeria was tainted with ethnicity. The position taken by the Igbo State Union was, therefore, a reflection of the degree of hostility directed against the Igbo soon after independence.

The Union's defensive response to anti-Igbo sentiments during the period is in agreement with the observation of Jack Katz that:

> *Members of organizations [and groups] are subject to criticism by outsiders for their performance and are aware of their vulnerability. They expect that to some extent, the official hierarchy will do the work of explaining their position in controversies with outsiders.*[23]

Unfortunately, there are no proofs that government ever took any decisive step to stem the tide of anti-Igbo prejudices before the events of 1966 – 1970, namely, the pogrom and the Nigeria – Biafra war.[24]

Igbo Advocacy

Like other ethnic associations, the Igbo State Union assigned to itself the role of the spokesman, defender and arbiter of the Igbo people in colonial and early post-colonial Nigeria. In particular, the Union served as a conciliator and pacifier on issues involving its affiliates and even the NCNC. For instance, the Union tried to resolve the NCNC's intra-party squabbles which had its origins in the December 1952 National Convention of the party at Jos.[25] Similarly, the Union played a leading role in bringing the parties to the Eastern Regional parliamentary crisis of

1953 to a conciliatory meeting where it tried to persuade many leading Igbo politicians to support Eyo Ita, an Ibibio and foremost leader of the Ibibio State Union. However, this move by the Union was opposed by many Igbo personalities and Azikiwe, who had resigned his post as President of the Union. He also encouraged other Igbo Ministers to follow suit. In the same vein, when the Central Working Committee of the NCNC met at Aba in October, 1957, and suspended some key members of the party, notably K.O. Mbadiwe, and Jolawole Balogun, Mbadiwe appealed to the Executive Committee of the Igbo State Union to intervene.

Apart from mediating in the many crises that threatened the NCNC, the Igbo State Union also tried to ensure Igbo unity in many respects. In 1955, for instance, it mediated in the clash between the Onitsha Improvement Union and the Non-Onitsha Igbo Association in the important market-town of Onitsha. The trouble centred on the allocation of market stalls and representation in the Onitsha Local Government Council. In its submissions to the select committee set up by the Eastern House of Assembly to enquire into the petition of the non-Onitsha Igbo residents in Onitsha, the Union supported the call for equal treatment on both issues. When a dispute arose in Ogwashi-Ukwu between the Obi and the Ogene (Traditional Prime Minister), the Igbo State Union mandated its Permanent Under-Secretary to visit Ogwashi-Ukwu and settle the dispute. The Onitsha and Asaba Igbo Unions sent delegates who accompanied the Permanent Under-Secretary to the town, and attempts were made to resolve the issues at stake.[26]

In addition, the Executive Committee of the Union, in 1948, read on the pages of the *West African Pilot Newspaper* that District Officers in some parts of the Cameroons were maltreating Igbo people resident in the country. In fact, a delegation of Igbo residents in Cameroun which attended the Port Harcourt Conference confirmed the report. Consequently, the Union decided that its

Permanent Under-Secretary, Eluwa, should visit Cameroun. The places he visited included Mbonge, Victoria, Buea and Bamenda. He met the District Officer, interviewed some Igbo in the area and returned with the impression that the reported anti-Igbo attitudes were unfounded.[27] Another side to Eluwa's visit to Cameroon is that it illustrates that the Igbo State Union was objective. In as much as there was a newspaper report on the maltreatment of some Igbo settlers in the Cameroons and which was corroborated by the delegation from Cameroon to the 1948 Port Harcourt Conference, the Union carried out its own investigation and refused to swallow, hook, line, and sinker, the reported ill-treatment.

However, there can be no denying the fact that the Union had to contend with widespread hostility against the Igbo. It accordingly had no option than to prepare itself for the challenge of defending Igbo interests within and outside Nigeria. It began to get involved in national politics when ethnicity began to threaten the Nigerian federation. That was when it denied the allegation of Igbo domination of the Federal civil service. In 1965, it had to send a delegation to the Prime Minister regarding the discrimination against and harassment of Igbo indigenes in other parts of Nigeria.

Because the promotion of the welfare of the Igbo anywhere and everywhere was one of its major objectives, the Igbo State Union in 1949, decided to send a delegation to the then Spanish-controlled island of Fernando Po (now Equitorial Guinea). During the colonial period, the British colonial regime and the Spanish government had reached an agreement to ship Nigerian labourers to work in Spanish plantations in that island. This agreement was made because of the labour shortage which the Spanish government encountered in that colony. There were reports about the maltreatment of the Igbo labourers in the island which prompted the Igbo State Union to dispatch the delegation.

It mandated the Calabar branch to visit the island to ascertain the veracity or otherwise of the allegations, and also to brief the Igbo labourers there about the activities of the Union. Accordingly, on September 21, 1949, the Calabar branch of the Igbo State Union applied to have an audience with the District Officer (D.O.) for Calabar. The purpose was to seek official government recognition and a letter of introduction so that the delegation could resolve disputes among Igbo labourers in Fernando Po, as well as collect levies from them for the Union's educational objectives.[28] the District Officer recommended the tour but advised that the application for a letter of recognition should be sent to the Acting Resident Officer of Calabar for onward transmission to the Honourable Chief Secretary to the Goventment. In a letter to the British Vice-Consul and Labour Officer in Fernando Po dated October 2, 1954, the Labour Office in Calabar outlined the purpose of the proposed Igbo Union tour and solicited the assistance of the Vice-Consul for the delegation. The touring team was to include Messrs I. W. Ebere, O. Agwu, J. M. C. Onwuasoanya, T. I. Egwu, and N. I. Okpe. But before the letter could be forwarded to the Vice-Consul at Fernando Po, the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government at Lagos, in a letter dated October 29, 1954, expressed scepticism on the request of the Igbo State Union being granted by the Spanish authorities.[29]

However, in September 1955, the Igbo Union once again wrote through the National Principal Secretary, D. K. Onwenu, to the District Officer for Calabar and the Anglo-Spanish Employment Agency on the purpose and the importance of the proposed tour to Fernando Po. Among the main aims of the tour, according to the Principal Secretary's letter, was the need to check the infiltration of Igbo people who had no commission to go to Fernando Po. The visit was considered necessary too because of the fear of the Igbo Union that "... some Ibo men may misbehave somewhere which misbehaviour may bring disrepute to the Ibo race as a whole".[30] It was the avowed intention of the Igbo State Union that all Igbo indigenes,

wherever they may be, behaved well and according to the traditions and customs of the host communities.

That explains why the Union raised the suggestion that every Igbo person travelling to Fernando Po should be made to carry a card indicating that he or she belonged to the Igbo ethnic group. Such cards, according to the proposal sent to the District Officer at Calabar, were to be shown to officers of the Igbo State Union by any man or woman who disembarked from the ship from Calabar at Fernando Po. But in acknowledging the letter embodying the proposal, the District Officer for Calabar, R. Varwill, argued that the Igbo Union had no right to force identification cards on travellers to the Spanish island colony since there was sufficient governmental safeguard for travellers to that island.[31] In other words, the carrying of such cards would have amounted to a usurpation of the duties of the government by the Igbo State Union.

That notwithstanding, the Union's delegation was eventually permitted to tour the island and to meet Igbo indigenes living and working there. The visit gave Igbo plantation workers in Fernando Po a sense of pride as their complaints and grievances were heard and the misunderstandings between some of them were resolved amicably. Such quarrels usually bordered on the unwholesome activities of some illegal Igbo migrants which tended to tarnish the image of members of the ethnic group as a whole. The officials of the Spanish government in the island were visited and they promised to work closely with the local branch of the Union in the island which the touring team sought to form.[32]

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Igbo State Union had Economic Advisers who surveyed domestic and international trade positions for the benefit of the Union and the Igbo as a group. These Advisers connected the Union to the economic world and kept an interest in

monitoring the entrepreneurial development of the Igbo across Nigeria and West Africa, including the Cameroons. The Igbo State Union planned a National Bank of Igboland and an Endowment Fund to which all Igbo were to contribute (they were about three million Igbo adults at that time).[33] The Endowment Fund was to invest the contributions in the Bank to serve as its initial capital, thereby placing the bank in a strong position to call for shares and subscriptions. People could obtain loans for industrial and other commercial purposes from the bank as a way of developing the Nigerian economy, industry and infrastructure, among others.

However, the bank never materialized because many Igbo had their own ideas. Even the meeting called for the purpose of kick-starting the bank was marred by sharp criticisms. Like the bank, no proper channel was created for building the thirty secondary schools envisaged by the Union. As a result, the body encouraged Igbo communities to build their own schools without waiting for the Union to do so[34]. Although the planned Igbo Bank never materialized, the idea did not completely die. One can argue that Azikiwe's interest in and eventual establishment of the African Continental Bank, ACB, had its roots in the idea. Also, the idea could not have failed to influence the emergence of other indigenous banks like the National Bank of Nigeria, among others. If so, one can further argue that, indeed, the Igbo State Union greatly contributed in laying the foundation for indigenous banking in Nigeria

The Economic Advisers of the Union helped in sensitizing both the NCNC and the Igbo on the economic necessity of siting or locating industries in the Eastern Region. It was, afterall, there that the NCNC had its most ardent supporters, especially after 1951. Although the economic relevance of the Igbo State Union was overshadowed by the activities of its affiliates, the Union claims some credit for inspiring the formation of some of those less-inclusive unions and

inviting them to the Assembly with the idea of ensuring that development projects at home in Igboland were pursued with vigour.

This contributed greatly to the rapid economic and educational development of the Igbo, not only in Nigeria but also in West Africa. Furthermore, the Union spared no efforts in defending the economic interests of the Igbo in Nigeria during the period 1948 to 1966. This was particularly the case in Port Harcourt which was regarded as part of Igboland[35]. The city of Port Harcourt itself had been established in the early 1900s as a result of the discovery of coal in Enugu. A railway line was built from Port Harcourt to the Udi coal fields and there was, thus, an astounding labour force for the Igbo, hundreds of who were not only employed in the mines and railways but also in the construction of the new harbour at Port Harcourt. Others went there either as permanent or itinerant traders. These people sought labour for wages and earned money with which they were able to purchase imported goods and improved their standards of living.

According to Howard Wolpe,[36] the Diobu-Ikwerre people were the original owners of Port Harcourt, and they are part of an Igbo-speaking clan possessing cultural and historical ties with the Ijaw-speaking communities to the coastal South.[37] Wolpe also believes that though in recent times the Ikwerre have tended to deny any significant community of interest with the Igbo, they are nonetheless far more culturally and historically related to the Igbo, especially the Owerri Igbo, than to their riverine/coastal neighbours.[38] In fact, the Ikwerre have been at pains to deny their Igbo origins, especially since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970. Unfortunately, they have not been able to produce any concrete evidence of their Ijaw origins. In other words, Ikwerre history and traditions of origin have since the 1970s been a matter of conjecture and have so far remained inconclusive.[39] What is not in doubt is that prior to 1970, they, as well as the Etche people, regarded themselves as Igbo. They, without second thoughts, participated in Igbo activities

as well as membership of the Igbo State Union where persons like Joseph Wobo and Mpi held positions in the Executive Committee in 1959. As A.E. Afigbo[40] rightly observed, the Ikwerre repudiated their Igbo connections during and immediately after the Nigeria-Biafra War of 1966-1970, when some self-appointed linguistic pundits at the University of Ibadan in the 1970s issued a paper that tended to show that Igbo is not a language but a cluster of languages.[41] Some Ikwerre elements capitalized on this by prefixing a capital "R" to the names of their towns which were obviously Igbo names. Thus, Umukurushi became Rumukurushi, Umuigbo became Rumuigbo, and so on and so forth.

The important point, however, is that prior to the outbreak of hostilities in Nigeria in 1966, most people generally saw Port Harcourt as an Igbo city. The Igbo themselves regarded the city as one of their most important urban centres in Nigeria. This explains why the city played a special role in the movement towards Igbo social and political self-identification and why it came to replace Lagos as the administrative headquarters of the Igbo State Union in 1948. For one thing, it was more centrally located to other parts of Igboland than Lagos, and for another, the city had a sizeable Igbo population made up of rich traders and professionals who exercised considerable influence in their nearby villages than did the Lagos-based Igbo.

The large Igbo presence in Port Harcourt was not doubt due to its economic potentials, especially its harbour and the industrial possibilities of the city. Those Igbo who made Port Harcourt their homes contributed immensely to the economic and physical development of the town. Their wealth, positions, and influence did not in any way win them the admiration of the non-Igbo elements in the town. As a matter of fact, the city featured prominently in the separatist debates between the Igbo majority and the non-Igbo groups. Thus, when the Ijo, Ibibio, Efik, and Ogoja minority ethnic groups of the then Eastern Region formed the Calabar, Ogoja and

Rivers (COR) State Movement and submitted their proposals to the Minorities Commission, Port Harcourt was included. Nothing mattered to the COR State Movement more than the economic potentials of Port Harcourt and hence their desire to have it in the proposed state.

Of course, the Igbo themselves were equally aware of the status of Port Harcourt as the coastal economic nerve centre of the Eastern Region in general and of the Igbo group in particular. The Igbo State Union took it upon itself to defend and if possible, extend the economic advantages of the Igbo in Port Harcourt. It was acutely aware of the implications of any agitations involving the claims of the COR State Movement to Port Harcourt. Indeed, in the words of Wolpe:

> *...the projected Rivers State implied the excision from Ibo-controlled territory of much of Eastern Nigeria's economic potential, as represented by the expanding harbour and industrial facilities of Port Harcourt and by the rich-oil palm plantation of Ibo-speaking (but politically ambivalent) Ikwerre people in Ahoada and Port Harcourt divisions.*[42]

Thus, the Igbo, represented by the Igbo State Union, opposed the creation of any state that would entail their loss of Port Harcourt, which was owned and developed by them.[43] It is not as if the Igbo were against the creation of states, but what they did not want was the carving out and inclusion of any part of Igboland into the proposed states. The Igbo State Union believed that the idea of states creation and the possibility of including Port Harcourt in any such state were based on the hatred of the Igbo. Indeed, the Union is said to have declared that, "Those who want states could have their state but without an inch of Iboland and a hair of an Iboman."[44] In essence, the Igbo State Union never lost sight of its obligations to the Igbo people. Its position on the issue of Port Harcourt may seem political, but it

obviously had economic undertones. In short, the status of Port Harcourt was more of an economic than a political nerve centre for the Igbo prior to 1966.

Therefore, and bearing in mind the importance of Port Harcourt to the Igbo prior to 1966, and extrapolating the main arguments as they affect the relationships between them and other Nigerian ethnic groups in the East, one should not lose sight of the underlying socio-economic and political conditions of the time. Nigeria was still and is a modernizing society characterized by a conflict situation or negative inter-dependence between ethnic groups. Psychologists and sociologists like Morton Deutsch,[45] and Betram H. Raven and Jeffrey Z. Rubin[46] have contended, that where there is no agreement in the goals and means of social groups in any given society, mutual competitiveness and prejudices are bound to occur. This was precisely what obtained in Port Harcourt between the Igbo and those non-Igbo groups who submitted memoranda to the Willink Commission of Inquiry into Minority Fears, and who were calling for a state that would include the city of Port Harcourt.

In essence, the lacunae in the argument that the Igbo State Union frustrated the aspirations of other ethnic groups in Eastern Nigeria are, first, that Port Harcourt was seen as part of Igboland and the Igbo had made a lot of investments both emotionally and economically there. Secondly, and arising from the first is that the situation which brought out the political instincts of the Igbo State Union was, indeed, one of conflict. These explain the assertion of the ethnic factor by the Union in defending what it considered an Igbo interest. It is, therefore, most unfair to view the activities of the Igbo State Union in protecting the economic interests of its constituency as a symbolism of the venal nature of greed and acquisitiveness. If anything, it was a positive response to the imperatives of social relations in a modernizing society which, according to Crawford Young, usually involves

recourse to primordial loyalties in order to withstand the prevailing climate of competition and conflict.[47]

While it may be right to accept Ken Saro-Wiwa's observation that the Executive Committee of the Igbo State Union met rather frequently between 1958 and 1959,[48] the fact is that those meetings were not held with the overwhelming intention of frustrating the creation of Rivers State. Rather, they were held essentially to defend Igbo interests in Port Harcourt. One sure way of defending such interests was to oppose the inclusion of that city in a state that would have reduced the Igbo to a minority. No other aspirations could be more legitimate than this.

Though agriculture was widely practised in pre-colonial and colonial Igboland, the soil types found in most parts did not make farming a profitable venture. In fact, agriculture was scorned by many Igbo individuals. In the words of one observer, "Educated Ibo people are known for their rejection of agriculture as a way of life, many preferring poverty in an urban area to life at home."[49] As a result, the Igbo State Union was not really forthcoming in promoting agriculture. It was more concerned with the welfare of those Igbo who had left the unattractive rural environment for the more promising urban areas.

Where agricultural production for export purposes was encouraged in Igboland, it was usually the communal unions rather than the Igbo State Union that took the initiative. For example, the Abiriba Communal Improvement Union (A.C.I.U.) was able to start a rubber plantation with an envisaged acreage of about two thousand. It even negotiated a ten-thousand pound loan from the Eastern Region's Fund for Agricultural and Industrial Development.[50] By opening a rubber plantation in Abiriba, the A.C.I.U. had two objectives in mind, namely; to provide employment in the community, and to bolster its financial standing.[51]

Nevertheless, the Igbo State Union realised the importance of palm oil production in the economic advancement of the Igbo people. In this regard, although it did not run any cooperative society, the Union worked closely with the NCNC to ensure better pricing for palm produce.[52] When pioneer oil mills were eventually introduced in Eastern Nigeria, the Union undertook to enlighten the farmers on the importance of the mills, though the general attitude was one of suspicion on the real intentions of the colonial government. When the situation was made clearer to them, the women came to appreciate the implications of mechanized production of palm oil.

However, following the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the colonial government's decision to buy surplus palm oil which could not be sold abroad, the local farmers began to be taxed to support the war effort. It is believed that a barrel of palm oil which previously sold for twenty-five pounds fell to twelve pounds, while a tub of palm kernel fell from one pound, five shillings to only fourteen shillings.[53] The slump in the prices of cash crops and the increases in the prices of imports had some unpleasant consequences on the Igbo and other Nigerians. Not only did the womenfolk, who were the major producers of palm oil and kernel, lose some of their economic independence to some of the pioneer oil mills, the prices paid for much of what they could supply were distressingly low.

The derisory prices paid for local exports were not mitigated by the ineffectiveness of the colonial government's intervention through controls on marketing, transport and food marketing.[54] It was the activities of the NCNC and the ethnic unions in Nigeria, especially the Ibibio State Union and the Igbo State Union that tried to offset the harsh economic climate because they were able, through varying degrees of success, to influence stronger government involvement in the normalization of things. But this was long in coming, and both Unions could at best wait for the government to implement its policies aimed at redressing the

situation. These began to manifest in the post - World War II years when agitations by political parties and ethnic unions led to the construction of roads to facilitate the shipment of primary products which were once again in high demand in Europe. There was a welcome relief as prices for exports rose and farmers could once more have a sense of pride.

In the area of infrastructural development, the Igbo State Union realised that on its own, it could not provide facilities like tarred roads for the evacuation of agricultural products, as well as bridges, railroads, and pipe-borne water. It, therefore, took the practical step of calling on the government to provide these facilities since they had direct relevance on the well-being of the people, who were, in any case, the primary engines of development. In the same vein, the Union urged the government to provide hospitals in order to ensure that rural dwellers in particular were saved from preventable deaths. For example, the Mbaise Country Hospital was built due to the Union's persistent demand for the provision of medical facilities to the rural communities of Igboland. The road liking Owerri and Umuahia, and the provision of pipe-borne water in parts of these cities were due to the prompting of the Igbo State Union.[55]

SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT

The aims and objectives of the Igbo State Union are spelt out in Article Two of the Union's 1951 Constitution. There, it is clearly seen that in conception and practice, the Union was basically a cultural organization that sought to bring all people of Igbo descent together and promote cultural understanding among the various Igbo groups, both at home and in the Diaspora. In carrying out these objectives, its activities were, of course, everywhere influenced by the political climate of the time. Yet, it was not a political movement or organization.

Cultural Awareness and Modernization

Perhaps, the Union's greatest achievement was in bringing the various Igbo voluntary unions together. According to S.N. Nwabara, there were about two hundred and one (201) registered Igbo Unions in colonial Nigeria.[56] These unions were limited in scope and narrow-minded in outlook, and could not speak with one voice on matters affecting the Igbo in general. The formation of the Igbo State Union, reinforced the solidarity of the Igbo by affirming, to some extent, the common kinship and cultural bonds among the people. In other words, that the Igbo now share a common cultural orientation whereas in pre-colonial times they were not a self-conscious and unified community, owes much to the activities of the Igbo State Union.[57]

Elizabeth Isichei sees the promotion of the Igbo Day (an annual holiday in honour of Igbo accomplishments) as one of the most concrete achievements of the Union.[58] Beginning from 1954, the said Igbo Day was held every first Saturday of October, and was a holiday for all Igbo. The aim, according to Nwabara was, "...to immortalize the role of the Igbo in the crusade for a new order, so that the present and future generations could refer to the Igbo people with pride...."[59] That new order, of course, included the struggle for Nigeria's independence.

The various branches of the Union also celebrated the Igbo Day. For example, on September 27, 1955, the Calabar branch, through its Principal Secretary, J. M. C. Onwuasoanya, applied to the District Officer for an announcement on the then Nigerian Relay Service, in respect of the Igbo National Day celebration scheduled for October 1, 1955. It required all the Igbo indigenes resident in Calabar to assemble at the Sacred Heart School ground in 'native attire'.[60] Apart from this, each local town or village union presented traditional dances from its area and served local dishes not only to celebrants but also visitors and guests as well. An air of camaraderie and brotherhood pervaded the occasion, and the people were reminded to always appreciate the need to be tolerant and to

pursue the overall development of Igboland with a tenacity of purpose.[61] To quote Austin Ahanotu:

> *'Ibo Day' was a very important occasion for the Ibo unions... 'Ibo Day' was a time of reflecting on Igbo cultural heritage. Celebrants were awarded honorific titles, symbol of the progress a person has made in his community... Such cultural programmes helped the Igbo maintain his cultural heritage and reduce the psychological pressure of urban living.*[62]

The Igbo State Union was indeed instrumental in reinventing and sustaining corporate unity among the Igbo through its promotion of the Igbo Day celebration.

Also, by establishing and reinforcing the Igbo personality in colonial Nigeria, the Union greatly helped in diminishing the divisive traits of some Igbo groups, especially in the face of the intense competition for scarce resources. In other words, the Igbo predisposition towards individualism and excessive competition was offset, no matter how minimal, by the activities of the Igbo State Union. This the Union did by ensuring and promoting Igbo corporate loyalty and acceptance of community obligations. Thus, without necessarily eroding or breaking the old social, economic and psychological commitments of the various Igbo groups, the Union tried to infuse in the Igbo a sense of cultural identification that enabled them to meet the demands of the colonial setting.

Moreover, the Union inspired the formation of its branches in those parts of Nigeria where none existed. For example, in the Union's zeal in its formative years to mobilize the Igbo, its Permanent Undersecretary had to go from one Igbo town to another on such a lean purse that Igbo inhabitants in the towns he visited sponsored his trip to the next town. Through this way, local branches of the Union were started in various towns. In Kano for instance, a very strong Igbo Union was started under the leadership of Messrs Okonkwo and Ibeneme, the President and

General Secretary, respectively. As already noted, the Kano branch established a primary school and a secondary that were open to children of Igbo and non-Igbo parents in that centre of Islamic learning and commerce.[63]

When the colonial government tried to sidetrack the Igbo State Union in appointing chiefs into the proposed House of Chiefs in 1957, the Union in its memorandum to the commission inquiring into the influence and status of chiefs in the Eastern Region, warned that the Igbo had their own machinery for selecting their chiefs and would not, therefore, tolerate any imposition.[64] Its opposition was based on the argument that the role of such chiefs as representatives of their districts or clans as a sort of liaison between the Igbo at home and those outside Igboland, would amount to an unnecessary duplication of functions since that was the same role the Union assigned to itself and was, indeed, already playing. This Igbo State Union protest was organised by Z.C. Obi and Dickson K. Onwenu - President and Secretary of the Union, respectively.

More importantly, the Union was an agent of social change[65]. Because it was committed to Igbo welfare, the Union's activities (as exemplified by the Igbo Day Celebration and the concomitant Igbo cultural solidarity) played an important role in giving the Igbo a new self-confidence in their efforts to adjust to the changes necessitated by British colonialism. Put differently, the Igbo State Union altered the exclusiveness and cultural heterogeneity that characterized Igbo communities in pre-colonial times.[66] The Union introduced a new and more inclusive Igbo identity and inspired in them the desirability for common aspirations. This it did by socially mobilizing the Igbo through their voluntary unions, [67] which, as already argued in Chapter Two, sent representatives to meetings of the Igbo State Union. One important consequence of such increased interaction was the harmonization of Igbo interests during the period under consideration.

Western Education

By the 1920s and 1930s, it had become apparent to many Nigerians, especially in Yorubaland, that the adoption of the aspects of the values of the British colonial government was necessary if they must fit into the new scheme of things created by colonial rule. Like other Nigerians under British rule, the Igbo realized that they had to work for changes within the limits set by the colonial authorities. This was so because the possession of superior weapons by the British had rendered military confrontation an unviable option. Since the thing emphasized by the colonial order was development along western values and colonial prescription which inevitably involved the adoption of western-type education, the Igbo State Union Constitution in Article II clearly provided that among its aims and objectives was the encouragement of educational progress for all Igbo, both at home and 'abroad'.

Thus, a very important achievement of the Union was the establishment of the Igbo National High School at Aba in 1951. It has to be noted that the vigorous promotion of western education was the cardinal objective of the Igbo State Union. It was in pursuance of this goal that the Union planned to build thirty secondary schools in various parts of Igboland. Though it was not possible to build all of the envisaged thirty secondary schools, the eventual completion of the Igbo National High School at Aba vindicated the sincerity of purpose of the Union. Its establishment also appears to have been instrumental to the founding of other secondary schools by communities living within the vicinity of Aba and, indeed, all over Igboland.

The need to embrace western education became more compelling because it had the advantage of serving as a means of gaining employment in the new colonial structure as well as a means of getting acquainted with colonial-style political and administrative systems.[68] Indeed, the successful pursuit of the types of job created by the colonial government involved a reasonable degree of

educational attainment. It also required a high degree of self-denial which was of course, well-appreciated by the Igbo State Union. Therefore, education along the line prescribed by the colonial system had to be encouraged, and priority attention was therefore, accorded to Western education. It was in this respect that the Union made the most outstanding contribution because it encouraged the Igbo to embrace western education, build schools, and to cooperate with Christian missions, the government and the Native Authorities to accelerate and sustain educational development. But it was the local clan or town improvement unions that awarded scholarships to their indigenes, not the Igbo State Union. However, the Union did give scholarship awards to P. O. Nsugbe and Dennis Osadebey who read Law and Sociology respectively, abroad.[69] According to Ahanotu:

> *The ethnic unions very much wanted to create modern men and communities. They concluded that the best way to accomplish (and speed progress towards) this goal would be to build, manage, and control their own institutions of learning.*[70]

That was why the Igbo State Union emphasized the importance of education, though the impetus for the expansion in Igboland derived from the efforts of local communities and their improvement unions or association. For instance, the establishment of the Enuda High School by the Abiriba Communal Improvement Union (A.C.I.U) in 1950 was a direct fallout of the activities of the Igbo State Union.

Similarly, the schools established by branches of the Igbo State Union in Kano, Kafanchan, and Gusau were managed by expatriates and were very much sought after by parents because of the high moral and academic standards they exhibited.[71] Sometimes, local communal improvement unions built schools and handed them over to Christian missions to manage. This was the case with the Nkwere Aborigines' Union which built the St. Augustine's Secondary School

(1948), and the St. Catherine's Girls School (1953), and handed both over to the Church Missionay School (C.M.S) to manage.[72] Indeed, the many community schools that proliferated all over Igboland in the 1950s and 1960s helped immensely in the effort initiated by the Igbo State Union to make the Igbo adapt to the imperative of the newly emerging Nigerian state. They inflamed the imagination of the local people who were otherwise only dimly aware of the importance of having primary and secondary schools in their own rural communities. In fact, not only did communities in Igboland begin to compete in the building of schools when the colonial government showed any reluctance or inability to do so, these communities even hired teachers for their schools.[73] Thus, the rapid rate of educational advancement and the concomitant socio-economic advancement of the Igbo in colonial and early colonial Nigeria owed much to the establishment of primary and secondary schools by Igbo communities.

The team spirit which these communities exhibited in the task of bringing western education closer to the people had much to do with the traditional communal spirit which has always been a the feature of the Igbo.[74] In essence, the people were able to maintain their traditional values and life-style while also trying to adapt to, and indeed, incorporate the new values introduced by British colonial rule. In other words, the vigorous promotion of Western education by the Igbo State Union and its affiliates was informed by the fact that British colonization gave umbrage to the Igbo people because their educational handicap in early colonial Nigeria virtually reduced them to second-class citizens vis-a-vis the Yoruba and even their Efik neighbours. The Union's decision and plan to build thirty secondary schools all over Igboland was not one of unconscious and undirected blind forces at work. Instead, it was the result of conscious effort and desire on the part of the Union to overcome the handicap of the Igbo people in the area of Western education.

Therefore, one of the most far reaching changes in Igbo society in colonial and independent Nigeria was the people's adaptation to British rule and Western education and civilization. This was made possible by their willingness to embrace western education on their own without waiting for the government to establish schools for them. For instance, prior to 1930, the Yoruba had an advantage over the Igbo educationally and held over 65% of the jobs meant for people with the same knowledge of English language, while most Igbo, had at most, primary schools certificates. But this gap was bridged in the 1940s and 1950s.[75] The Igbo, through the activities of the Igbo State Union, gradually but steadily began to compete favourably with the Yoruba.

Inspiration to and relationship with other ethnic unions

On a wider plane, the activities of the Igbo State Union as a veritable articulator of geopolitical interests at the sub-national and micro-national levels inspired the formation of more inclusive ethnic unions among other Nigerian groups. Adegoke Adelabu, the NCNC stormy petrel from Ibadan, was inspired by the Igbo State Union's activities which led him into forming the Egbe Yoruba Parapo as a Western counterpoise to the Union.[76] As a matter of fact, Adelabu is quoted as having declared, in his inaugural speech, that the Parapo has as its cardinal objective the furthering of Yoruba solidarity , "... in the same way that the Igbo State Union served its people".[77] This clearly illustrates that the Igbo State Union was, indeed, the envy of others and that those others aspired to establish its replicas in their homelands.

Furthermore, the emergence of the Northern Elements Progressive Association initiated by Aminu Kano, Raji Abdallah, Sa'ad Zungur and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, as well as the formation of the Bauchi General Improvement Union owed much to the Igbo State Union. Raji Abdallah, the brain behind the Northern Elements Progressive Association, was a Zikist leader,[78] and Mallam

Sa'ad Zungur, one of the founders of the Bauchi General Improvement Union was Nnamdi Azikiwe's strong man in the North and was later to become the General Secretary of the NCNC.[79] These men were, not doubt, influenced by the Igbo State Union, which informed their decision to form similar unions in their respective areas.

The same is largely true in the case of some ethnic unions in Nigeria that were formed before 1948 but saw in the Igbo State Union examples worthy of emulation and were, thus, fired-up.[80] It is true that among the Yoruba for instance, ethnic associational activities date to as far back as 1918 (when the Egba Society was founded in Lagos to promote the interests of Egbaland),[81] and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa was founded in London in 1945.[82] But it was the tenacity of purpose with which the Igbo State Union approached its objectives that spurred these other unions and associations, including the Ibibio State Union (which had been founded in 1928) into becoming more vocal in colonial and early post-colonial Nigeria.[83] In fact, it was not until 1948 that the Egbe Omo Oduduwa was founded in Nigeria by Obafemi Awolowo and other Yoruba politicians and leaders ostensibly to champion pan-Yoruba nationalism but basically to counter the role of Nnamdi Azikiwe and the Igbo as the leading nationalists. The Tiv Progressive Union is said to have been, "... fired by the exemplary communal spirit of their biggest trading partners, the Ibos..."[84]

It has to be noted that the Igbo State Union maintained cordial relationships with many other ethnic unions in Nigeria, the occasional media war between it and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa notwithstanding. Also, at no point was an Igbo Union meeting held or a plan hatched by the Union to dominate other ethnic groups either by subtle or violent means[85]. Its stated objective was the development of Igboland, and it is on record that other ethnic groups did approach the Igbo State Union for

help in organizing similar unions. For instance, the Ogoni people in present-Rivers State, led by Paul Birabi, sought the advice of the Igbo State Union in their effort to form their own ethnic union. The Igbo Union received the Ogoni delegation very cordially and gave them hints on the organizational structure to adopt.[86] It was so clear to the Rivers people then that time the Igbo State Union and its agents were friendly and not out to dominate them.

Thus, when it was time to nominate a member to the Eastern Regional Constitutional Conference in 1949, apart from Birabi, who was already a member of the Eastern House of Assembly, Igbo and Rivers peoples chose Eluwa of the Igbo State Union not on ethnic basis but as a provincial affair. At the said conference, Eluwa represented Port Harcourt while Birabi represented the Ogoni.[87] Similarly, the Igbo State Union maintained good relations with the Ibibio State Union. In fact, Eluwa visited D.F.C Essissien, the Secretary-General of the Ibibio State Union, to exchange ideas on the running of their organizations.[88] Both organizations, after all, had the same objective of advancing the well-being of their peoples, especially through encouraging Western education.[89] Moreover, according to a one-time Secretary of the Ibibio State Union, Calabar, N.U. Akpan, there was no discernible relationship of competition between the two unions.[90] Indeed, in the 1950s, both unions became more political, though the Igbo State Union somewhat openly identified with the NCNC in its face-off with the Action Group and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, while the Ibibio State Union remained neutral more or less. But individual members could identify with any political party of their choice.[91]

There is, therefore, no denying the fact that the relationship between the Igbo as represented by the Igbo State Union and similar groups in Nigeria was one of mutual respect. The Igbo did not constitute themselves into an island of primordial ethnic continuity in a sea of change. Rather, they cooperated with other Nigerian groups in order to encourage the integration of Nigeria. They also never

sought to subdue and dominate other groups, using their ethnic loyalties as an instrument for such a purpose. If the Igbo State Union was so political as to arouse the fears of other ethnic groups, this should be considered as incidental to the main purpose for which the Union was formed. It was the politics of scarcity, not the Igbo State Union, which inevitably led to competitions and conflicts between ethnic groups in Eastern Nigeria, Lagos, and indeed, the entire country. This point has indeed been over-stressed in this book.

However, it is relevant to emphasize that it was this condition that also gave rise to the vulgar mythology that the Igbo State Union and indeed the Igbo people often exhibited an outer show of social distance[92]. James O' Connell has argued that, *"They [the Igbo] lived apart from the Northerners in Sabon-Gari... scarcely married at all outside their own ethnic group [ad]... tended to treat the northerners with contempt"*. This in turn led to the conjuring up of a series of disdainful Igbo stereotypes. The truth is that the Sabon-Gari predated both the Fulani conquest of Hausaland and the British colonization of Nigeria. The Sabon-Gari or "strangers' Quarters" date back to the pre-Birnin period of the History of Hausaland. At the time, state formation processes had begun in Hausland, and stranger elements were confined to their own separate quarters or settlement within the emerging cities. Overtime, non-agricultural groups were attracted to the Sabon-Gari which subsequently became an admixture of nucleated lineages and non-related immigrant lineages. [93]

When the British colonized Nigeria, they retained the Sabon-Gari system in order to pursue their colonial agenda of divide-and- rule. One way through which they did this was by ensuring that Southern Nigerians who resided mostly in the Sabon-Gari had minimal contact with the indigenous Hausa-Fulani elements. This is what O'Connell did not observe in his essay. The allegation of Igbo aloofness and arrogance should, therefore, be taken with a pinch of salt.

ENDNOTES

1. Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*. (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1983), 47
2. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain*: *An Account of the Nigerian Civil War*. (Lagos: Saros International Publishers, 1989), 177.
3. Audrey C. Smock, *Ibo Politics: The Role of Ethnic Unions in Eastern Nigeria* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 208.
4. Simon Ottenberg, *"Ibo Receptivity to Change"*, in William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (eds.), Continuity and Change in African Cultures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 130.
5. Immanuel Wallerstein, *"Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa"* in Pierre van den Berghe (ed.), Race and Ethnicity in Africa. (Lusaka: East African Publishing House, 1975), 5.
6. M. M. Green, *Ibo Village Affairs*. (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1964), 7.
7. See A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs*. (London: Longmans, 1972).
8. Smock, *Ibo Politics*, 237-8.
9. NAE, Riv Prof. 2/1/87, C. 633, *Native Authorities and Clan Unions*.
10. NAE, Riv Prof. 2/1/87, C. 633, *Native Authorities...*
11. Joseph Gugler and William G. Flanagan, *Urbanization and Social Change in West Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press,1974). 95
12. Sklar *Nigerian Political Parties*, 464
13. John S. Thomas, *"The Socio-economic determinants of political leadership in a Triojolobal Maya Community"*, American Anthropologist, Vol.8, No.1, February (1981), 127.
14. Philip Selznick, *"An Approach to a Theory of Bureaucracy"*, American Sociological Review, Vol. VIII, No.48, (1948), quoted in David L. Sills, "Voluntary Associations: Instruments and Objects of Change", Human Organization, Vol.18, No. 1, 1959, 18.
15. Smock, *Ibo Politics*, 224
16. James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, (Benin City: Broburg and Wistrom Publishers, 1989), 341
17. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, 341
18. Lawerence P. Frank, *"Ideological competition in Nigeria: Urban populism versus Elite nationalism"*. Journal of Modern African Studies, 17, No 3 (1979), 439.
19. Igbo State Union Pamphlet, No.1, Enugu (no date but probably1964), 1.
20. Chief Z.C. Obi. Interview, August 15, 1992 at Uruagu, Nnewi.
21. Obi, Interview cited.
22. Obi, Interview cited.

23. Jack Katz, *"Cover-up and Collective Integrity: On the Natural Antagonisms of Authority Internal and External to Organizations"*, Social Organizations, Vol. 25, No.1, October (1977), 6
24. Daily Express Newspaper, 18 March 1985
25. The NCNC National Convention held at Jos in December in 1952 led to the expulsion of three Federal Ministers from the party even when none of them was present at the said meeting. Those affected were; A.C. Nwapa (Commerece and Industries); Eni Njoku (Mines and Power); and Okoi Arikpo (Lands, Survey and Local Development).
26. Interview with Chief Eluwa at Owerri, July 1990.
27. Eluwa, Interview cited.
28. NAC CADIST 3/3109- *"Igbo Tribal Union"*.
29. NAC CADIST 3/3109- *"Igbo Tribal Union"*.
30. Interview with Eluwa
31. Eluwa, Interview cited
32. Eluwa, Interview cited
33. Interview with Eluwa Cited.
34. Eluwa, Interview cited
35. The Executive Committee of the Igbo State Union in 1948 decided to transfer the headquarters of the Union from Lagos "to Port Harcourt in Igboland".
36. Howard Wolpe, *"Port Harcourt: Ibo politics in microcosm"*. Journal of Modern African Studies, 3 (1963), 47
37. Wolpe, *"Port Harcourt: Ibo politics..."*
38. Wolpe, *"Port Harcourt: Ibo politics..."*
39. See, for instance, Otonti Nduka, *"The Ikwerre in historical perspective"*. Unpublished paper presented at the Rumuigbo Civic Centre on the occasion of the seminar on an Examination of Ikwerre History and Development. 6th and 7th January 1989. In his words, "...views concerning the origins and ancestry of the Ikwerre are now at best were (sic) hypothesis"
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44. Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain...*, 181.

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48. Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain*, 177.
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50. Smock, *Ibo politics*, 99.
51. Eluwa Interview cited.
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55. S.N. Nwabara, *Iboland: A Century of Conflict with Britain*, 1860-1960. London: Hodder and Stoughton,1977), 224.
56. David R. Smock and Audrey Smock, *Cultural and Political Aspects of Rural Transformation: A Case Study of Eastern Nigeria.* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 295
57. Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People.* London: Macmillan, 1976.
58. Nwabara, *Iboland: A Century of Contact,* 228
59. NAC CADIST- *Ibo Tribal Union*
60. Eluwa, Interview cited.
61. Austin Ahanotu, *"The Role of Ethinc Unions in the Development of Southern Nigeria"*, In Boniface I. Obichere (ed), Studies in Southern Nigerian History. (London: Frank Cass and Coy Ltd, 1982), 162.
62. Eluwa, interview cited.
63. See G.I. Jones, *"Report on the position, Status and Influence of Chiefs and Natural Rulers in the Eastern Region".* Enugu (1957), 30. Z.C. Obi and D.k. Onwenu, the President and Principal Secretary, respectively of the Igbo State Union, signed the document on behalf of the Union.
64. The definition of social change here is that of Wilbert E. Moore who sees it as, "... the significance alteration of social structures (that is of patterns of social action and interaction), including consequences and manifestations of such structures embodied in norms (rules of conduct), values, and

cultural products and symbols. See Wilbert E. Moore, *"Social Change"*, In International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, vols 13-14, 366.

65. Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*. 45

66. One of the most influential and less inviolable explanations for enduring harmony in a heterogenous environment is the notion of social mobilization made popular by Karl W. Deutsch. This perspective assumes that cultural interaction between groups is largely beneficial. See Karl W. Deutsch, *"Social Mobilization and Political Development"*, American Political Science Review, 55 (September, 1961), 493-514.

67. Noah (ed), *Proceedings of the Ibibio Union 1928-1937*,

68. Eluwa, Interview cited.

69. Ahanotu, *"The role of ethnic unions..."*, 162

70. Dr. (now Professor) S.C. Okereke, interview, October 15, 1994 at the University of Calabar. He is an old student of the Igbo National Grammar School, Kano.

71. Ahanotu, *"The role of ethnic Unions..."*, 166

72. Simon Ottenberg, *"Ibo receptivity to change"*, 131

73. James O' Connell, *"Authority and Community in Nigeria"*, In Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe (eds), Nigeria: Modernization and the politics of communalism.(Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1971), 649.

74. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic politics in Nigeria*. (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 219.

75. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to nationalism*, 343.

76. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to nationalism*, 343.

77. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, 344

78. Ranti Famuyibo, *"Town Unions: Yesterday, Today"*. Sunday Times, September 2, 1990, 11

79. Famuyibo, *"Town Unions:*

80. Famuyibo, *"Town Unions:*

81. Coleman, *Nigeria*: *Background to Nationalism*, 357-358.

82. For example, the Tiv Progressive Union had been formed in 1946 to protest Hausa domination and encourage Tiv cultural unity. The Urhobo People's Union was formed in Lagos in 1948 as a cultural organization but assumed a quasi-political toga and serving as a link between the Urhobo people and the Nigerian polity. Both followed the footsteps of the Igbo State Union in fighting for the political and economic advancement of their peoples through education. See Famuyibo, *"Town Unions..."*

83. Famuyibo, *"Town Unions..."*
84. Eluwa, Interview cited.
85. Eluwa, Interview citied.
86. Eluwa, Interview citied.
87. Eluwa, Interview citied.
88. Eluwa, Interview citied.
89. Chief N.U. Akpan. Interviewed at No 5 Duke Town Drive, State Housing Estate, Calabar, on October 5, 1992. See also M.E. Noah, *Proceedings of the Ibibio Union.*
90. Akpan, Interview cited
91. James O'Connell, *"Political Integration: The Nigerian case"*, In Arthur Hazzlewood (ed), African Integration and Disintegration. (London : OUP, 1967).
92. Charles O. Okoko, *"Pre-Colonial Hausaland"*, in Chidi E. Osuagwu (ed), *Citizenship Education 1: Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Okigwe: Whytem Publishers, Nigeria, 2014, 28.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSTRAINTS TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IGBO STATE UNION

The formation of most unions or organizations is usually fraught with difficulties, especially at the initial stages. Unless they are effectively tackled, such problems could most times, stultify the noble ideals of the founders of those unions. In a plural society like Nigeria, the situation is compounded when such a union or organization is perceived by some people as aspiring to win and maintain some advantages for its members vis-à-vis other groups. This was precisely the position in which the Igbo State Union found itself during the period of its existence.

As a matter of fact, the genesis of the Union's problems dates back to the early years of the Igbo Union, Lagos, which was seen as an adjunct of the NCNC? This impression on the part of some other Nigerian ethnic groups continued up to the formation of the Igbo Federal Union. Thus, in trying to examine the major constraints of the Igbo State Union between 1948 and 1966, cognizance must be taken of the initial problems of the Igbo Federal Union, problems it bequeathed to the Igbo State Union from 1948 upwards. These constraints had two main dimensions - internal and external. While the internal constrains took the form of problems such as shortage of funds and organizational and leadership issues, those that were extraneous in nature included the negative impressions which the Union's activities elicited in the colonial administrative circles and among other ethnic groups in the country.

INTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

A primary objective of both the Igbo State Union and its predecessor was the establishment of thirty secondary schools in Igboland. It also planned to establish a National Bank of Igboland, which, it was hoped, would grant loans on favourable conditions to Igbo businessmen and women. The idea was to ensure a rapid educational and economic development of Igboland to enable the people fit properly into the scheme of things in the emergent Nigerian nation. However, these noble plans could not be realized, though the Igbo National High School was established in Aba in 1951. Factors responsible for this failure included the problems of organization, leadership, and funds. Importantly, the biggest challenge that the Union had to contend with was how to sell its ideas to the many clan/village and voluntary unions of the Igbo spread all over Nigeria and the Cameroons.

Financial Constraints

The successful attainment of the goals of any organization, especially ethnic unions with programmes as ambitious as those of the Igbo State Union, is often predicated on the availability of funds. As a matter of fact, both the attainment of the goals of any organization and its recognition and legitimacy are, to a very extent, determined by the steady availability of funds for such an organization. Otherwise, it might be seen as a toothless bull-dog which can only bark but cannot bite. Without enough money to run its affairs, an organization is most likely to be denied legitimacy by those it seeks to serve.

The litmus test of the Igbo State Union's ability and credibility involved its leadership embarking on tours of those parts of Nigeria and the Cameroons with sizeable Igbo population. Such tours, as already discussed, were undertaken by B.O.N. Eluwa in his capacity as first, the Secretary-General of the Igbo Federal Union, and later, as the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Igbo State Union. Places visited included Ibadan, Owo, Onitsha, Enugu, Oturkpo, Makurdi, Lafia, Jos,

Kafanchan, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Minna, and Lokoja, as well as the South-West Province of Cameroon. The lean purse with which Eluwa made those tours and the fact that he had to depend on the goodwill of the Igbo he met at those locations clearly illustrate the extent of the Union's financial 'crisis.'

The paucity of finance was a big impediment and frustrated the actualisation of the Union's lofty ambitions. If the Union had financial leverage and had invested in viable economic ventures, the situation would not have been as excruciating as it was. The dues and levies from the less-inclusive improvement unions or associations were simply not enough to sustain the financial needs of the Union. Moreover, only very few of such other unions were ready to pay up their fees and levies to the Igbo State Union.

Because of the relative poverty of majority of the people in colonial Nigeria, raising funds for any project at all was a difficult assignment. For the Igbo State Union in particular, many of the communal improvement unions or associations in colonial Igboland were too independent-minded. They were, therefore, not financially committed in their relationship with the more-inclusive Igbo State Union. In fact, they promoted education as vigorously as did the Igbo State Union by embarking on the building of primary and secondary schools in their communities. This meant that they raised money for their own development activities and cared less for the Union's financial status.

The Igbo State Union could not finance most of the projects it had envisioned because many of the less-inclusive associations were unwilling to be affiliated to it and thus make financial contributions. Eventually, the Union could not establish more than one out of the projected thirty secondary schools. The British architectural firm, Messrs James Cubit and Partners (which had designed the Eastern Regional Library in Enugu), was contracted to design the plan of the college. The tours embarked upon by the Permanent Under-Secretary and his

Assistant to raise funds proved largely abortive. The amount they raised could only be enough to pay up the professional fees of the architects. Therefore, the building plan had to be modified.[1] As a matter of fact, shortage of funds greatly handicapped the smooth execution of the Igbo National High School (or College), the only one of the projected thirty secondary schools ever to be established.

Similarly, its inability to establish the envisaged National Bank of Igboland was because of its financial incapacitation. Moreover, the Union could not maintain a secretariat as impressive as that of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa because of limited finances. Unlike the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, the Igbo State Union had no chauffer-driven cars for its principal officers. This, however, could be easily explained by the fact that unlike its Yoruba counterpart, the Igbo State Union was neither an ancillary of the NCNC nor was it funded by that party. In other words, while the Action Group funded the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, the Igbo State Union was financially independent of the NCNC.

Recognition and Acceptability

Being urban-based, the Igbo State Union was largely unknown in the rural parts of Igboland. While it is true that Igbo ethnic identity during this period was contingent upon the socio-economic and political changes of colonial Nigeria, the Union assigned to itself the task of advancing the cause for Igbo unity. This was a difficult assignment because there were many less-inclusive communal associations which still viewed the Igbo State Union as a distant organization that would not be able to cater for their interests. In other words, though the Union held strong appeals to the Igbo, many of them did not necessarily abandon their various village or communal associations, even when such associations later became members of the more inclusive Igbo State Union.[2] In fact, it was the need to counter this scepticism of the average Igbo on the ability and relevance of the

Union that led to the change of name from the Igbo Federal Union to the Igbo State Union. The idea was to involve the rural Igbo people through their traditional rulers rather than depending on the urban-based Igbo whose tenancy in the townships were temporary, and who were likely to leave the leadership stage when they retired from the civil service, business establishments or relocated to other towns.

Moreover, in order to win and retain the support of Igbo rural dwellers, the leadership of the Igbo State Union agreed that the less-inclusive unions based in the cosmopolitan urban centres should be entitled to four representatives at the Igbo State Assembly, while the rural clan unions were entitled to six representatives each. Superficially, this arrangement appeared to have favoured the rural unions. But the urban-based and educated elements were not overwhelmed by the complicated system of representation which gave more seats to rural unions. In the first instance, rarely did the rural unions meet the maximum allotted to them, and secondly, such unions were more often than not, represented by their educated elements who were of course, resident in the urban areas.[3]

However, the Igbo State Union never really had any power of control or direction over the affiliated unions, although it comprised representatives of such unions, and coordinated some of their activities. Neither did it constitute an alternative power structure to the local NCNC branches in as much as these drew their popular support directly from the people or indirectly from the town and clan unions. Indeed, the limited success of the Igbo State Union in co-opting many of the less-inclusive associations and its failure, therefore, to coordinate their activities and undertakings, negated the realization of most of its planned programmes. These smaller unions also pre-empted the role of the Union in promoting education by establishing community primary and secondary schools.

According to A.C. Smock, the potential significance of the Union was diminished by the salience of primary identities within the Igbo political system and indeed within the Eastern Nigerian political system. The relative autonomy and integrity of primary ethnic groups in the Eastern Region was sustained by the configuration of power within these political systems. This, according to Smock, was so essentially because within the political system of that Region, there were no regional constituencies or interest alignments. The recruitment and election of candidates for political office, the formation of demands and competition for amenities, and the communication of messages between politicians and the populace, reinforced the local constituency boundaries within which they took place[4]. Local ethnic unions, therefore, remained largely autonomous and, in fact, resisted the attempts of the Igbo State Union to co-opt them. It is contentious to say that the independent-mindedness of the local ethnic unions was as a result of the Igbo penchant for egalitarianism. What is certain is that the need for Igbo emancipation through education engendered competition among Igbo sub-groups.

In addition, the nature of the political system made it inevitable for politicians to enter into loose alliances in order to meet their personal and constituency objectives. Those who went into politics, thus, had to seek and win the support of not only members of their own ethnic groups but that of other ethnic groups as well. Local Igbo politicians were, therefore, often tempted to manipulate the communal associations for their own selfish ends. In fact, the reluctance of some of the less-inclusive Igbo communal associations to subordinate their autonomy to the more encompassing Igbo State Union could be blamed on the activities of some of these politicians who regarded their local improvement unions as their platforms. It was not uncommon for such politicians to enter into loose alliances with their colleagues from other unions that cut across ethnic or communal lines, so that sometimes, their support bases overlapped.

Leadership Crisis and Personality Clashes

Apart from the problem of trying to achieve a fusion of local unions into a formidable Igbo State Union, some frontline members of the Union who were interviewed by the author insisted that the activities of some of the Union's leaders, especially Z.C. Obi, did the Union more harm than good. Until his elevation to the post of a President following Azikiwe's resignation of that position, the Igbo State Union was led by very educated members. Azikiwe handed over to Raymond Njoku. But following his appointment as Federal Minister for Transport, Njoku handled over to Obi. On assumption of office, Obi is said to have become a controversial figure such that some of his contemporaries argued that he personalized the Union during his tenure from 1954 to 1966. He was also accused of bypassing the Executive Committee on a number of occasions and taking decisions without consulting the Committee members. Furthermore, it is claimed that he co-opted a large number of less-educated businessmen into the Executive Committee and, thus, diminished the role of the Union[5].

This impression of Obi's tenure as President of the Igbo State Union appears to be tainted with malice. The claim that he co-opted a large number of less-educated individuals into the Executive Committee of the Union would seem to imply that Obi was a stark illiterate. The truth is that he was neither controversial nor less distinguished than some of his traducers. He retired in 1951 from the United Africa Company (UAC) as its first Produce Manager of African origin and later rose to become a Federal Senator representing Rivers Province. By the standards of that era, he was not only educated but was also highly exposed and experienced. Thus, one might argue that if, indeed he had problems running the Union, it was not because of little education.

According to Smock, Obi virtually transformed the Union into his personal property by not only keeping its minute books and other records at his home rather

than the secretariat but also by refusing to call the Executive Committee into regular session.[6] Obi's reasons for his actions are too easy to state: they are, indeed, very difficult to interpret because it is not clear whether they were a response to the political situation in Nigeria or whether they were the outcome of a kind of timorous despotism by some leaders of the Union who sought to secure the ascendancy of the business class over the educated elite, as his critics would seem to imply. The fact is that during the period, the British colonial government had set up the Willink Commission on the Fears of Minorities. Obi's sactions may have been intended to forestall any act of sabotage on the part of leaders of the Union.

Between 1957 and 1966, the Igbo State Union came to be made up of competing groups who, nonetheless, sought to plough the same piece of land. Whereas some officers of the Union saw themselves as a dedicated group, the Obi faction was seen as emergent political entrepreneurs who merely wanted to use the Union as a platform for their political ambitions. The climax of the personality clashes within the Union was Eluwa's resignation in 1954 as the Permanent Under-Secretary. This action on the part of the Union's first organizer and secretary was blamed on Obi's handling of the affairs of the Union. It is claimed that on assumption of office, the Port Harcourt-based businessman co-opted some less-educated persons into the Executive Committee of the Union. Thus, he is said to have regarded other officials as a threat to his position and sought either to frustrate or disgrace them out of office at the slightest opportunity. Such an opportunity, according to Eluwa, Obi in 1954 came to him when Mr. Eluwa resigned following an incident which makes an interesting reading. [7]

In 1951, the Igbo National College was opened at Aba with Eluwa as its Manager and Nsugbe as his assistant. C.A. Odigbo from Eluwa's hometown was appointed the school's principal, although he did not study education in the University. As principal, Odigbo was accused of engaging in unwholesome

practices, such as collecting bribes before admitting students into the school. On the strength of this, Eluwa reported the case to the elders of his home-town, such as Nathaniel Alozie. He also went to Aba with Nsugbe to seek legal advice from Amanze Njoku, a lawyer, who agreed that Odigbo's appointment should be terminated. However, he failed to advise that the man should be given a chance to defend himself, and this was a big mistake.

Odigbo's appointment was eventually terminated. But he rallied some leading members of his community who lobbied members of the Executive Committee of the Union to reconsider his case. One of these was Obi, who was then a Vice-President of the Union. Obi called an Executive Committee meeting that later called for a delegates' meeting. This meeting bypassed both the Secretary-General and the Permanent Under-Secretary and came to be nothing short of a campaign of calumny against Eluwa. Obi is also said to have set up a Committee to examine the relationship between Eluwa and Odigbo. While the findings of the Committee vindicated Eluwa, Obi is said to have carried a report that bypassed the Secretariat and virtually created another one. This led to Eluwa's resignation, a move he considered more honourable but which was a big blow to Union because the vision which he had nurtured for it over the years was frustrated[8].

Although it was the educated elite who gave impetus to the formation of the Igbo State Union, Eluwa claimed that it later came to be dominated by less-educated individuals, especially businessmen. This is said to have created structural and operational problems for the Union since the loyalties of these men were divided between their business interests and those of the Union. At least, the position of a stipendiary Permanent UnderSecretary had helped in giving the Union a more defined sense of direction and purpose. But with the exit of some of its leading officers, especially Eluwa, the Union began to lose its sense of purpose and

became more involved in national and regional politics. Its role as a cultural and an education-oriented organization came to be maligned by members of other ethnic groups who came to see it as part and parcel of the NCNC. [9]

It has been stated earlier that the overriding objectives of the Union included the building of thirty secondary schools as well as the establishment of a bank. Laudable as both objectives were, they never came to materialize. Of the projected thirty secondary schools, only one was ever established, and the National Bank of Igboland never took off from the drawing board. Although the main reason for these failures was lack of funds, there was also the issue of personalities being more interested in themselves than in others or even in the welfare of the Igbo State Union.

The idea for the establishment of the bank initially received massive support. The Union had a plan that was not just eerie but one which would have been concretely realized. At least it had officers who were burning with zeal to see that its plans were carried through. In fact, the bank was to have been the backbone of the building of the secondary schools. It was anticipated that there were about a million adults in Igboland, out of an estimated population of about three million, and that if each adult contributed a pound sterling, this could float a bank that would liberalize the granting of loans to Igbo businessmen as well as support the other plans of the Union. The initial contributions were to be a sort of endowment, and the money for the building of the projected thirty secondary schools was to come from Igbo communities.

These reasons informed the decision of the Union to send its Permanent Under-Secretary on nation-wide tours to enlighten the Igbo people at home and 'abroad' on the objectives of the Union. But much as the, Permanent Under-Secretary tried to convince people on the good intentions of the Union, he found that the people were rather too sceptical. In his words:

> *...it was not easy to get the Igbo man to part with his hard earned money unless he could see how it would benefit him by way of cash profit or the promotion of favourable circumstances for himself and his children.*[10]

Furthermore, he learnt another important lesson, namely that:

> *...the then civil service environment inspired in the people involved in it greater idealism and an inclination to make sacrifices for the sake of the sort of progress inspired by contact with the Western world. In short, this lesson was that the trend of thinking among the then civil servants was, shall I say, more progressive than among traders. So, as I saw it, the outlook among civil servants and company workers in Lagos and Port Harcourt and such other National, Regional or Provincial administrative centres was more progressive than among people who lived in the predominantly commercial centres.*[11]

The result was that some Igbo elements who had their own ideas sharply criticized the proposed bank. The meeting called for this purpose was torpedoed, and so no proper channel was created for the building of the projected schools. Hence, communities in Igboland took it upon themselves to build their own secondary schools.

Political party affiliation and ethnic prejudice

Apart from the leadership crisis which bedevilled the Union, the misperception which members of other ethnic groups and organizations had of it also constrained its activities. In the main, this problem arose because of the Union's relationship with the NCNC, especially when it metamorphosed into a political party from a political movement. Both Howard Wolpe[12] and Richard Sklar[13] believe that the NCNC and the Igbo State Union had a fused leadership

structure, though one was a regional party and the other an ethnic union. Thus, by 1964, virtually all the highest ranking politicians of the NCNC were also the leading officers of the Igbo State Union.

The mutual relationship between the NCNC and the Igbo State Union, however, dates back to the 1930s and 1940s. Then, the NCNC was just a political movement with many organizations affiliated to it. One of these was the Igbo Union, Lagos. But the Igbo State Union, when it came into being in 1948, elected Azikiwe as its President. Opponents of the party often cited his position as President of both the Igbo State Union and the NCNC to substantiate their allegation that the NCNC was an Igbo party.

Although Azikiwe did not attend the Igbo State Assembly at Owerri in 1952 but sent a letter rejecting moves to re-elect him President of the Union, the fact that he once held office simultaneously as leader of the NCNC and President of the Igbo State Union, had already done a lot of harm to the image of the Union. The situation was not helped by the fact that the Union's leaders found themselves at pains to exonerate it from charges of being involved in partisan politics rather than performing the role of an arbiter in the settlement of disputes among Igbo leaders and communities. According to one source,[14] the Igbo State Union was to be independent in all things political and neutral in nothing affecting the Igbo people and the destiny of Igboland. Furthermore, the platform of the Union was one that was to enable any Igbo politician to participate and encourage the Union's objectives, irrespective of his political leanings or affliation. All political parties and politicians were given equal opportunity.

But the Union allowed itself to be exploited for political purposes in the 1952–3 NCNC crisis, so much so that its claim of being a non-partisan cultural body became questioned and many non-Igbo politicians in the Eastern Region were infuriated. The said crisis resulted in the explusion from the NCNC of three

Central Ministers, namely, A.C. Nwapa (Commerce and Industries), Eni Njoku (Mines and power), and Okoi Ariikpo (Lands, Survey and Local Development).In addition, six regional ministers who had supported the expelled Central Ministers, where in turn expelled from the NCNC, or more appropriately, forced to resign. These were Eyo Ita, E.J. Oli, S.J. Una, R.I. Uzoma, S.W. Ubani Ukoma, and R.J.E. Koripamo.[15]

The NCNC crisis of 1952 to 1953 resulted in the expulsion of Eyo Ita from the party after his removal as Leader of Business in the Eastern House of Assembly. As a result of this, many NCNC stalwarts from the then Calabar Province (Eyo Ita's constituency) resigned their membership and became increasingly identified with the Action Group of Obafemi Awolowo and the National Independence Party (NIP) which Eyo Ita himself founded. Among the decampees from NCNC were Udo Udoma and Umo Inyang. Others like Okon Effiong Okon Eyo and Ibanga Udo Akpabio remained with the NCNC, although the former was later to quit the party in 1956 when he was removed as the Chairman of the Eastern Regional Development Corporation. The National Independence Party (NIP), according to Okwudibia Nnoli:

> *...became the embryo movement of the ethnic minorities in the Eastern Region, charging the Igbo with domination of the Region and demanding regional status for the homeland of these ethnic minorities.*[16]

Its alliance with the Action Group, beyond the fear of Igbo domination of the politics and economy of colonial Eastern Nigeria, was a retaliatory move intended to spite the NCNC for the treatment it meted out to Eyo Ita. In order to embarrass the NCNC, therefore, the NIP entered into an alliance with the Action Group to contest the 1952 and 1953 elections. The fear of Igbo domination was manifested in the outcome of the elections where the NCNC's dominance of

Eastern Nigerian politics was challenged by the Action Group. For instance, in the 1953 elections, the NCNC won 72 out of 84 seats in the Eastern House of Assembly. But in 1954 when elections were held for the Federal House of Representatives, the NCNC won 30 out of the 42 seats, the NIP won 3 seats, while the Action Group and the Independents won 5. Also, in March 1957, elections held into the Eastren House of Assembly produced the following results: NCNC 63 seats out of 84, Action Group 15, and NIP 5.[17] Even when the NCNC took a disciplinary action against the then Principal Secretary of the Igbo State Union, J. A. Wachukwu, it was expected that the Union would formally protest. On the contrary, however, Wachukwu and A.C. Nwapa were repudiated by the Union, and relieved of their offices in the Union.

Another occasion where the Union's identification with the NCNC leadership proved embarrassing to both the party and the Igbo people was during the 1953 Eastern Regional parliamentary crisis. The NCNC utilized the Union to persuade Igbo people to close ranks behind Azikiwe. This was objected to by a number of influential Igbo who joined the opposition United National Independence Party. The same was largely true during the face-off between Azikiwe and Mbadiwe where the Igbo State Union tried to intervene at Mbadiwe's request. Azikiwe mildly reproached the Union's leadership and refused to attend a peace meeting it called on January 26, 1958 at Onitsha.

After these incidents, the political role of the Igbo State Union diminished as the leading NCNC politicians of Igbo ethnic nationality gradually withdrew from the body. Thereafter, formal control of its Executive passed to an Igbo elite group that was less politically inclined. This new Executive Committee was not easily manipulated by the NCNC leadership. However, its lower echelon, such as the town and district unions, worked independently to identify with the party. But the Union itself refused to be subservient to both Azikiwe and the NCNC. It is claimed

that on occasions, the Union even criticized both the government of the Eastern Region and Azikiwe himself.[18]

However, these moves were belated, because the harm had already been done. The Igbo State Union itself was organized to unite the Igbo in accordance with the NCNC's Freedom Charter, and Azikiwe's leadership of both bodies up to 1952 was interpreted by non-Igbo groups as an attempt by the NCNC to impose Igbo dominion over Nigeria. Controversial statements by Azikiwe did not assuage such fears. In 1951, for instance, Azikiwe argued that Nigerian nationalists would have to rely on the NCNC to build the nucleus of a socialist commonwealth of Africa.[19] For the Igbo State Union therefore, its close association with the NCNC, especially in the late 1940s and 1950s, created misconceptions in the minds of other Nigerians as to the real intentions of the Union.

Indeed, the Union had identified with the party openly up to 1952. Therefore, other groups and parties naturally came to judge two of them by the standards which they felt were relevant to that identity. Both the Union and the NCNC came to be seen as two sides of the same coin. In fact, the Union was accused of undermining the pan-Nigerian aspirations of the NCNC, irrespective of the fact that the Union from 1953 was no longer an extension of the NCNC, so to say.[20]

The difficulties which the Igbo State Union encountered because of its loyalty to the NCNC and the attendant misperception of the two by non-Igbo groups, especially in the Eastern Region could be summed up in the observation that:

> *When the ethnic affiliation of the more prospering ethnic group and of the administration coincided, talk began to be heard of this people's domination and suppression of the interests of ethnic minorities.*[21]

By 1953, the leadership of the Igbo State Union changed and it could no longer pursue its set objectives to any meaningful conclusion as it became more and more embroiled in the politics of colonial Nigeria. Matters were not helped by the allegation of Eluwa that one individual virtually came to run the organization as if it were a private business concern [22]. Such was the situation until 1966 when the Aguiyi-Ironsi regime which came to power after the 1966 coup d'état, banned the Igbo State Union alongside other ethnic unions and associations.

EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS

Normally, there are two sides to every coin. The objectives and activities of the Igbo State Union were also hampered by factors that were obviously extraneous. These extenuated the ideas which the Union tried to promote.

The Union and the Colonial Government's Aggression

The major external impediments to the smooth operation of the Igbo State Union were two-fold. In the first instance, and as previously mentioned, the Union's close association with the NCNC was viewed by non-Igbo groups as an attempt to impose Igbo dominion in Nigeria. But the most important external constraint was the attitude of the British colonial administration. To the colonial government, the Igbo State Union was an incipient political organization which must be nipped in the bud.

Moreover, anybody who was elected as an official of the Union was readily catapulted into public limelight and the colonial government's searchlight. This was the case with H.K. Offonry who was elected General-Secretary of the Igbo Union, Lagos, to succeed Dennis Osadebay. Soon after his election, Offonry was transferred to Jos in 1944 by the Department of Lands and Survey where he

worked. For that reason, Eluwa was elected in that same year to succeed Offonry. Thus, one of the major problems which faced the Union was the fact that initially, especially before 1948, it had no permanent leadership structure since much of its leadership was made up of civil servants who could either be transferred or threatened with victimization and thus discouraged by the colonial government.

At other times, the colonial administration sought to curtail the activities of the Union by instituting criminal proceedings against some of its principal officers. This was the case in 1949 when a copy of the appeal for funds letters sent by the Permanent Under-Secretary to prominent Igbo people was used as a basis for a criminal charge against him. The colonial Magistrate court in Enugu found him guilty of contravening the Public Collections Ordinance. But on appeal, he was discharged and acquitted by the High Court, also in Enugu. His appeal was led by Barrister Charles Dilibe Onyeama, while the defence at the Magistrate Court was led by Barrister Alfred C. Nwapa, who later became a principal functionary of the Igbo State Union.

The colonial administration viewed the activities of the Igbo State Union and its ancillaries with suspicion. They were regarded as trying to usurp the functions of the Native Authority Councils and were generally told that they could not have definite representation on the Native Authorities as unions but only if one or more of their members were members of such councils by selection of the families.[23] Even when the government began to tolerate the Union, it was advised to hands off politics. At all costs, the colonialists had to avoid giving the impression that they were allowing the Igbo State Union and the other less inclusive town unions to supersede the Native Authorities and to be considered the more important body.

Furthermore, the colonial government carried out campaigns of calumny against both the Igbo people and the Igbo State Union. For instance, when the Union's Permanent Under-Secretary visited Oturkpo in the course of his 1947

nation-wide tour, he was given a very hostile reception. The Igbo community there complained that the traditional ruler of the Idoma ethnic group, the Och' Idoma, had prohibited the renting of land to Igbo residents for farming. When he called on the Och'Idoma, the Permanent Under-Secretary was told that he (the Och' Idoma) had no grudges against the Igbo people. He admitted that his attitude was informed by the instruction from the British District Officer there, who had warned him to ban all Igbo from cultivating any land in Idomaland. The attempt by the Permanent Under-Secretary to intercede in a case of official discrimination nearly landed him in trouble as the District Officer arrested him for being 'discourteous.'[24]

Thus, as far as the British were concerned, Nigeria was two nations in one. Ideas from the South had to be prevented from getting to the North, and vice-versa. For the Igbo, the British created and sustained the impression that the Igbo State Union was associated with the NCNC, Zikism, and the *West African Pilot Newspaper*. While the newspaper carried out virulent attacks on British colonialism, the NCNC agitated for Nigerian independence. Because both the party and the newspaper were controlled by Azikiwe who incidentally also led the Igbo State Union, it was all too easy for the British officials to propagate the rumour in public and official circles that the Igbo State Union's activities were a subtle way of ensuring Igbo control of an independent Nigeria. Therefore, every move by the Union, no matter how well-intentioned, was viewed with suspicion and apprehension by many non-Igbo groups in colonial and early post-colonial Nigeria. The same was largely true of Azikiwe and the newspapers he controlled.[25]

That was why the Igbo became staunch supporters of Azikiwe and other Igbo who had made personal achievements and were committed to the advancement of their people. There are certain things in the Igbo that make them to be attracted to other groups. These include their thrifty nature as well as compulsion to hardwork, personal achievement and glory. Unlike the two other

major Nigerian ethnic groups, the Yoruba and the Hausa, ascription, until recently, was never a basis for recognition. Instead, personal achievement was a standard criterion for recognition, respect and honour. That was why they rallied round those of their own who had achieved fame and became prosperous through dint of hardwork and personal sacrifices.

Misperception of the Igbo Character

There are aspects of the lives of the Igbo that make them repulsive to other groups. The most prominent of these is their aggressive, uncompromising and boisterous nature. Boastfulness and arrogance are themselves products of the competitive lifestyle of the Igbo. The non-achiever is maligned and looked down upon. The achiever is widely acclaimed and respected. Invariably, the achiever (or anyone who thinks that he is an achiever) would always want to be noticed. That explains the Igbo penchant for boastfulness and arrogance once they think they have become successful.

Even with the British colonial officers, many Igbo felt superior in terms of education and personal achievements in business and other fields. To them, the British were unfit to rule Africans. Azikiwe squarely falls into this group. He had acquired good education in the United States and made some fortune in journalism - material and fame. He therefore, resented European occupation of Africa. For the British, the Igbo were an unwanted bug and they sought for ways to discredit them, Ironically, these were not short in coming.

Capitalizing on their shortcomings, the British adopted a deliberate policy of maligning the Igbo. They accused them of being too aggressive and of trying to impose their dominion over other Nigerian peoples. Since these other Nigeria groups already perceived the Igbo as such, it was not difficult for the British to

convince them that the Igbo were evil. Stereotypes were never in short supply and these readily fitted into the images already perceived by those other Nigerians, and which were steadily foisted by the British colonialists.

Resentment against perceived Igbo domination in politics and commerce was also expressed in Southern Cameroun which was until, 1962, part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Igbo indigenes had migrated to those parts as traders and civil servants during the colonial era. Although the Igbo civil servants and those who worked in European commercial houses were seen by indigenous Southern Camerounians as agents of British colonial rule, it was the aggressive and wealthy traders that irritated their hosts the most. These, coupled with the negative impressions which the non-Igbo had cultivated over the years of the Igbo people, such as clannishness, created problems for those Igbos domiciled in Buea, Kumba, Bamenda, Mamfe, Tiko, and Victoria.

The climax of anti-Igbo feelings in British-administered Southern Camaroun was the issuing of obnoxious public notices by the Tiko Native Authority on February 8, 1948, to the effect that:

(i) Whoever has an Ibo man as a tenant in his house must serve him a notice to leave his house as from the end of February 1948. Failure to do this, is liable to a fine of £5 (five pounds):

(ii) Whoever has an Ibo man cultivating a piece of land in his farm should serve him with a notice also to reap his fruits and leave the area vacant as up to the end of February, 1949;

(iii) The Ibos are highly restricted from going to fishing towns for any purchase of fish stuff. Whoever of them is found breaking this law is liable to a fine of £5 (five pounds). Only fishermen and some Cameroun natives who are interested to buy from them are allowed to bring fish;

(iv) No Cameroun lady is allowed to make sexual relationship with an Ibo man. Whoever of the ladies found breaking this law is liable to a fine of £5 (five pounds) by the Native Authority;

(v) No Cameroun native is allowed to buy anything from the Ibo and vice-versa. Any Cameroun native found buying anything from the Ibos is liable to the above fine. Likewise are Camerounians not allowed to sell anything to the Ibos.[26]

The Igbo traders were accused of profiteering and engaging in such unwholesome practices as adulteration of patent medicines[27]. But the main reasons for the antagonism are to be found in the fact that Igbo settlers prospered at the expense of their hosts who may have been less enterprising vis-a-vis the Igbo. Thus, calling the Igbo settlers names and discriminating against them may have served as a psychological compensation for the Camerounians. Furthermore, some of their politicians in the then Eastern Regional House of Assembly, such as Manga Williams, already had issues with the NCNC-led government and Igbo-owned newspapers, some of which had been critical of his activities in the House[28]. Therefore, the expression of anti-Igbo sentiments at both the individual and official levels in Southern Cameroun had political undertones.

Also, the claim or allegation that the Igbo were not assimilable is not backed by any evidence and, therefore, lacks merit. The presumed Igbo aloofness and clannishness was because they took refuge in the various branches of the many Igbo voluntary associations in Southern Cameroun. In fact, the discrimination and hostilities they were subjected to may have compelled the Igbo settlers to become isolationist and probably developed their own frames of mind to uphold

and defend their language and cultural peculiarities. Claude Meillassoux has rightly observed, on the reaction of an unwanted group outside its locality, that:

> *Associations may be a means of asserting their new freedom, of affirming their achievements in a milieu where social discrimination emerges from new and highly rated standards.*[29]

This was the situation in Southern Cameroun. The Igbo migrants decided to remain as one to enable them withstand the obvious cases of discrimination against them by their hosts.

The British colonial administrators, as earlier alluded to, were instrumental in foisting the fear of Igbo domination on members of other ethnic groups in Nigeria and the Camerouns. Igbo leaders did not assuage such fears through their ill-timed and unguarded statements. Furthermore, the close affinity that existed between the Igbo State Union and the NCNC, as well as the campaign of ethnic intolerance carried out by leaders of other ethnic groups, accentuated anti-Igbo sentiments in those non-Igbo communities where many Igbo indigenes had settled. The fear of Igbo domination was everywhere sustained by these circumstances.

But when put in proper perspective, the truth is that the Igbo had a reasonable percentage of the work-force in both the colonial government service and the many European companies in Nigeria and Southern Cameroun. They also formed the bulk of traders and transporters in many of these places. Because of these and their relative prosperity vis-à-vis their hosts, there developed in these other groups the feeling that the Igbo were not only lackeys of the British colonialists but were also to be their logical successors after independence must have been achieved. Thus, within the emigrant Igbo communities in Nigeria and the Camerouns, there developed a strong sense of consciousness of each other, and

this was encouraged by the hostile pressures exerted on these Igbo settlers by their hosts.

ENDNOTES

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3. Audrey Chapman Smock, *Ibo Politics: The Role of Ethnic Unions in Eastern Nigeria*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 18-19.
4. Eluwa. Interviewed on April 1993, at Owerri
5. Smock. *Ibo politics*, 18.
6. Eluwa, Interview cited.
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10. B.O.N. Eluwa, *"I Have Been Wonderfuly Led: The Retrospection of B.O.N. Eluwa, Snr. At 70"* (71st Birthday Anniversary Paper), 7.
11. Eluwa, *"I have Been Wonderfully Led"*.
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16. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Coy Ltd., 1978), 169.
17. Sir Henry Willink, *"Nigeria: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying them"*, CMND, 505, (July 1958), 36
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21. R. H. Ismaglova, *Ethnic Problems of Tropical Africa*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 85.
22. Eluwa, *I Have Been Wonderfuly Led*, 7.
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24. NAE. C. 633 Riv prof 2/1/87- *Native Authorities and Clan Unions*. This was in a secret message dated 8/3/47 from Government Lodge, Enugu by the Resident Commissioner for Port Harcourt, H.L.M. Butcher.
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27. Victor Bong Amanzee, *"The Igbo Factor in the Politics of the British Camerouns, 1916-1961"*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of History University of Calabar, 1995, 204.
28. Amanzee, *"The Igbo Factor..."* 195.
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30. Claude Meillassoux, *Urbanization of an African Community: Voluntary Associations in Bamako*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 75.

CHAPTER FIVE

IGBO ETHNIC NATIONALISM OUTSIDE THE AMBIT OF THE IGBO STATE UNION

There is no denying the fact that prior to the introduction of British colonial rule, Igboland was a collection of village democracies which had no great consciousness of large-scale political hegemony.[1] However, there was little social and economic distance between the various villages, though loyalty was imbedded largely in these villages. In other words, although each village was jealous of its own integrity, certain pan-Igbo similarities existed in the socio-cultural, economic

and even political spheres. For instance, and as Okechukwu Okeke has observed, in traditional politics, women did not participate routinely in political decision-making and did not, indeed, exercise political authority. However, they did intervene occasionally in political matters, especially in crisis situations[2]. Similarly, traditional Igbo religion was polytheistic, that is, the people worshipped many deities and gods, some of which commanded a large number of devotees and adherents across Igboland and even beyond. Examples here would include the Ibini Ukpabi of Arochukwu (or Long Juju), Igwekala of Umunoha, and Amadioha of Ozuzu.[3]

It was British colonialism and the creation of the Nigerian nation that brought out the best in the Igbo, namely, their value for hardwork, thrift and self-help.[4] It was these same situations that brought the worst out of the Igbo – their so-called clannishness and their contempt for other 'less pushful' groups.[5] The emergence of urban centres in Nigeria, as earlier stated, brought many ethnic groups closer than was the case in pre-colonial times. Earliest expressions of nationalist sentiments against British colonial rule were indeed nurtured in such urban areas.

Of course, ethnic particularisms also had their origins in these new townships. This is understandable, for the growth of urban centres resulted in closer inter-ethnic contacts between hitherto distant groups. Such situations, according to Stanley Lieberson,[6] involved at least one migrant group and an indigenous one, and usually led to each group trying to maintain the political and economic conditions that were considered compatible with the conditions before the contact. In essence therefore, new forms of political and economic competition were created by colonialism. In the course of this, cultural symbols came to be used, and ethnicism arose more or less as an ideological tool to be used in this competition[7]. With time, stereotypes were created for and by each of the ethnic

groups. For example, the Igbo, according to Smock and Smock, came to be seen as "...modernistic, achievement-motivated, and aggressive...."[8]

Probably because this stereotyped image of the Igbo was to some extent accurate,[9] there were expressions of anti-Igbo sentiments and write-ups in both Northern and Western Nigeria, especially in the turbulent days of early post-independence national politics. In the Northern House of Assembly, for instance, it is on record that in 1964, members of that House had, in their contributions to the budget session, verbally attacked Igbo people resident in the region. They advised that no more land should be leased to the Igbo and that even their existing property should be confiscated.[10] There were also anti-Igbo cartoons of a vulgar and insulting nature in the Northern Region's official newspaper *The Nigerian Citizen*, which alleged that the Igbo were cannibals.[11] The Northern Peoples Congress, the party in power in the then Northern Region, did itself publish a document titled "Salama: Facts must be faced", in which it set out the case against the alleged greed and ambition of the Igbo.[12]

In the Western Region, Ladoke Akintola's New Nigerian Democratic Party had as its stock-in-trade, the exploiting of Yoruba cultural themes as a counter to to the perceived Igbo political ascendancy. The party's campaign was thus, most virulently anti-Igbo. It accused the Igbo of trying to eliminate the Yoruba from the business and commercial fields.[13] Igbo leaders were equally maligned by other Nigerians and accused of trying to perpetuate a permanent domination of Nigeria by the Igbo.[14]

These attitudes notwithstanding, it remains incontrovertible that of all Nigerians, the Igbo have, since the early days of colonial rule, been the most mobile, the most receptive to changes introduced by British colonialism, and the most nationally oriented.[15] As a matter of historical fact, no work on Nigeria's political history has ever failed to acknowledge these attributes of the Igbo,

especially their nationalistic tendencies prior to 1966. It has been argued that one reason for this was because some parts of Igboland did not have enough land and resources to provide for natural expansion. Thus, a greater Nigerian became a crucial necessity to them[16]. In addition, large numbers of Igbo had migrated to the urban areas, and despite James O'Connell's arguments to the contrary[17], the Igbo were the most eclectic of all Nigerians in the urban centres. That is to say, the Igbo tended to show most positive feelings towards their hosts and had a higher inclination to marrying and living with non-Igbo.[18]

While it is true that Igbo relative tolerance and attitude towards others were informed by their liberal customary practices,[19] it goes without saying that a conbination of circumstances made them to be singled out for criticism and hatred by members of other ethnic groups. These include the rapid progress which they made in education and commerce as well as in politics.[20] In spite of these, however, the Igbo had, until 1966, always been for a united and integrated Nigeria. This was in contrast to the position of the two other major ethnic groups, namely the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani, who often considered the autonomy of the former Western and Northern Regions more important than Nigeria's unity. If anything, to the two groups, Nigeria's unity and integration was just a second alternative, the first alternative being the West for Westerners and the North for Northerners.[21]

Igbo Ethnicity and the Nigeria-Biafra War, 1967-1970

Against the backdrop of the above observations, can Igbo ethnic nationalism be adduced, with any justification, as a cause of the war of 1967-1970? The answer is of course, no. In the words of Bolaji Akinyemi:

> *Until the 1963 census fiasco, which was one of the events that eventually led to secession in 1967 by the Eastern Region, the Ibos were the most committed group to*

Nigerian unity and had not previously toyed with the idea of secession.[22]

A similar view has been expressed by Balarabe Musa, a one-time civilian governor of Kaduna State, who stated that:

> *It was only in the East that there was a body of people who had always advocated for Nigeria's unity. And they were given a rude shock. The coup of 1966, its rejection and what followed it paralyzed the East, the platform of Nigeria's unity.*[23]

Apart from these, the opinions of Nigeria's political leaders before 1967 are worthy of note. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, had at the March 1948 budget session of the Nigerian Legislative Council, spoken forcefully against a united Nigeria. In his words:

> *Many [Nigerians] deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one.... This is wrong. I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside this chamber.*[24]

On his part, Obafemi Awolowo had this to say:

> *Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression.... The word "Nigeria" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within Nigeria from those who do not.*[25]

Whereas Azikiwe made some uncomfortable utterances on what he considered to be the virtues of the Igbo,[26] there is no recorded evidence of where he expressed anti-nationalistic sentiments the way his contemporaries did. Indeed, not only were the Igbo in the forefront of Nigerian nationalism and integration, they were also very proud to be addressed as Nigerians rather than as Igbo people.

They did not take their Nigerian political identity for granted. To quote Stanley Diamond:

> *Having considered themselves citizens of the world, the Ibos had nurtured the idea of common citizenship with all the people among whom they lived. To inquire into the precise identity of an Ibo was to insult his sense of fraternity with other Africans in Nigeria. Being an Ibo was a private affair, perhaps a source of pride; but the public image was Nigerian.*[27]

Thus, as shall illustrated later, Igbo ethnic nationalism never threatened Nigerian unity. Ironically, it was the war of 1967-1970 that gave birth to genuine Igbo ethnic nationalism and it has continued to condition Igbo nationalistic attitudes in post-war Nigeria.

Having argued that Igbo ethnic nationalism, so defined, did not cause the Nigerian-Biafra War of 1967 to 1970, why did Nigeria go to war in 1967? The answer to this question is a painstaking excursion into the history of the Nigerian nation - the circumstances that gave birth to Nigeria and the constitutional arrangements that failed to ensure her national unity. Works on this aspect of Nigeria's history are a legion.[28] Consequently, this section of the book will be concerned essentially with some of the salient features of those developments.

One of these is, of course, the fact that Nigeria is a British creation which never existed until 1914. It was in this year that the British brought together their administrations in the Northern and Southern Protectorate and unified them. Indeed, as it was then, Nigeria is still home to some two hundred and fifty ethnic groups, depending on the bases adopted in dividing her population into ethnic groups. The country has the highest concentration of peoples of African origin in the whole world.

Secondly, in the early days of British colonialism, the colonialists held down the peoples of Southern Nigeria by supporting the less nationalistic and reactionary northern peoples through a divide and rule policy.[29] To the British, Southerners had an unenviable reputation of ungovernability, especially the Eastern provinces. Moreover, probably because they came from aristocratic backgrounds, the British colonial officers preferred the aristocratic and leisurely political settings of Northern Nigeria. They had no nagging opposition or criticisms from the commoners and enjoyed a tranquil partnership with Northern Nigerian emirs and other political figures. It has been aptly argued that:

> *This deeply felt British preference for the Northern Nigerian way of life was entirely without parallel in Southern Nigeria or, after 1939, in the Eastern or Western Provinces of the country.*[30]

Furthermore, whereas Nigeria was a unitary state prior to the advent of Arthur Richards, he, in what has been called an absolute despotic power, made constitutional amendments that changed the political arrangement into a kind of inchoate federation.[31] Thus, all the provinces and peoples of Nigeria were divided into three regions over which British Lieutenant-Governors presided. Richard's successor, John Mcpherson, worked within the structure bequeathed to him. The regionalization of national wealth and the inter-ethnic struggle for political power which these two men introduced in their constitutions of 1946 and 1951 respectively, are believed to have injected ethnicism into Nigerian politics.[32] The Mcpherson constitution effectively regionalized the civil service, and by this action, one of the strongest uniting links among Nigerians was split. This move contributed to ethnic tensions in Nigeria because it did not ensure the Nigerianization of the civil service on the basis of pure merit. In 1948, a commission was set up for that purpose but Mcpherson, by decentralizing such

major organs of government as the civil service, introduced ethnic sentiments and rivalries. According to Stephen O. Imoagene:

> *The [ethnic] consciousness which thus developed affected the recruitment system markedly. It changed the policy of 'Nigerianization' to one of 'indigenization'. It was no longer sufficient to be a Nigerian to get a job in this or that part of the country; one had also to satisfy such ascriptive requirements as membership in a particular [ethnic group]. Ethnicity became the principal criterion of recruitment.*[33]

From the beginning therefore, Nigeria was encumbered with a colonial legacy of ethnic disharmony and suspicion. A 1954 revision of the Mcpherson Constitution did not help matters. In fact, it gave more flexible money-raising powers to the central government and initially increased the social welfare obligations of the regions. But in the shorter run, huge opportunities were created in the regions by their new found powers of welfare and public works. In all, the arrangement did not only deepen regionalism but also intensified the particularistic sentiments of the dominant ethnic groups in the regions. These invariably weakened the sense of national identity.

Nigeria's national unity thus, came to be predicated on a constant adjustment of regional and ethnic differences. For instance, the regional differences between the northern and the southern parts of the country were such that there were Northern requests for delays in the achievement of independence. But the South viewed this as a national aim, and the attitude of Northern political leaders in the 1953 Council of Ministers debate on self-government marked the first major North-South split. This Northern opposition to Nigerian sovereignty was, without doubt, as a result of British paternalism which supported and ensured Northern dominance of the electoral and administrative processes in colonial Nigeria. It was

this British paternalism that made them frame the terms under which independence was granted to favour the Northern Region and thus put the Eastern and Western Regions at a political disadvantage. One way through which this was achieved was the unscientific methods by which more than half the population of the country was ascribed to the Northern Region. For instance, the 1963 census result gave the following figures out of approximately fifty six million people enumerated. The distribution was:

Northern Nigeria	-	29.8 million
Eastern Nigeria	-	12.4 million
Western Nigeria	-	10.3 million
Mid-Western Nigeria	-	2.5million
Federal Territory of Lagos	-	675,000[34]

At the time war broke out in 1967, the figures were still in favour of the Northern Region. According to John de St. Jorre, the figures were;

North	-	24.6 million
West	-	6.9 million
Mid-West	-	2.4 million
East	-	13.0 million
Lagos	-	0.5 million [35]

These disparities had their origins in the early days of British colonialism. As far back as 1905, estimates were made, and out of a population of eleven million for the whole country, the figures were:

Northern Province	-	7.16 million
Eastern Province	-	2.22 million
Western and Central Province	-	1.62 million[36]

The implication of these deliberate manipulations of population census figures in favour of the North was that it made Northern leaders to exhibit

contempt for, and intolerance of Southern Nigerian views, as evidenced by their rejection of the 1953 motion for self-government. Not only did the Premier of the Northern Region, Ahmadu Bello, see the 1914 amalgamation which brought Nigeria into existence as a mistake and agitated for a separate destiny for the North, he had in 1944 he had, in reaction to a West African Students' Union memorandum on free movement and employment of Southern Nigerians in the North insisted that those Southerners who were desirous of a united Nigeria should first embrace Islam.[37] Thus, the old regional structure, as Timothy Adebanjo observed, was simply out of place, with one region being larger than the other three combined.[38] By implication, the central government was reduced, so to speak, to ensuring tactical co-operation between two of the big ethnic groups against the third, since power crystallized around the major ethnic groups.

This parlous situation was not helped by the demise of British colonial rule. It is true that the elements that entered into the shaping of recognized inter-ethnic bargaining in colonial Nigeria involved negotiations with the British colonialists. It is also true, as this book has shown, that a combination of historical inheritances and the policies adopted by successive British administrators influenced the boundaries between the different groups in the North and South. But within the colonial setting, there was some cooperation between the nationalists. It was the introduction of the regional structure that encouraged the emergence of regionally, and invariably, ethnically-based political parties.

However, decolonization and independence in Nigeria marked an important turning point in inter-ethnic relations. In the words of Donald Rothchild:

> *The departure of the colonial third force meant that as the remaining ethnic collectivities struggled for power, they no longer operated within the same limitations as they had in previous times. None of the external restraining and cushioning forces had disappeared and*

> *such new counteracting factors as central strength, sense of common history, and transnational identities and aspirations were all too often incapable of dealing with the new strains.*[39]

In other words, British rule had united Nigerian leaders and its exit had the opposite effect of factionalizing them. Ethnicism was used extensively to coordinate political participation of the urban masses in the 1950s and 1960s and it became a more attractive ideology for the masses than nationalism.[40] Indeed, it offered a useful basis for political organisation as two new political parties - the Action Group (AG), and the Northern People Congress (NPC), were formed along ethnic and regional lines. At this point, instead of the Eastern and Western Regions quarrelling with the North, it became a situation of inter-ethnic squabbles. The NCNC, which had tried to mobilize trans-regional support bases and develop a pan-Nigerian programme, found itself forced to withdraw to the Eastern Region. This was in spite of the fact that post-World War II radical and militant nationalism that emphasized the unity of Nigeria as a transcendent imperative was largely an NCNC-inspired endeavour.

The three major political parties (the NCNC, AG, and the NPC) sought to consolidate their regional positions and to seize control of the central government through what has been labelled lavishly financed and ethnically-rooted coalitions, which in the end were not only untenable but also disruptive.[41] Thus, when Ahmadu Bello sensed that the NCNC and the Action Group might form a coalition against the Northern Peoples Congress, he stated that should his party's electoral dominance of the House of Representatives be threatened by such a coalition, his region would be compelled to pull out of Nigeria.[42]

At other times, the political leaders invoked the spectre of ethnicism to cover up their misdeeds.[43] For instance, Akintola sought to win Yoruba support by taking sides with the Governing Council of the University of Lagos which had appointed

a Yoruba, Dr. Biobaku, as the Vice-Chancellor of the University against Professor Eni Njoku, an Igbo, who had been recommended for that post by the Senate of the university.[44] Corruption and excessive clientelism on the part of politicians indeed, exacerbated their administrative ineptitude. Both ethnicity and clientelism operated side by side, though as Rene Lemarchand has argued:

> *Although clientelism and ethnicity are in many ways interrelated, they refer to basically different levels of solidarity. Whereas clientelism describes a personalized relationship, ethnicity is fundamentally a group phenomenon.*[45]

These two factors (clientelism and ethnicity) were responsible for the formation of the Nigerian Nationalist Democratic Party (NNDP) and the National Independence Party (NIP) in the Western and Eastern Regions, respectively. The former was formed by Akintola when he fell out with the Awolowo-led Action Group, while the latter was formed by Eastern Regional Ministers who had refused to vacate their seats when the NCNC parliamentary party had outlawed them. The crises following intra-party disputes in the Action Group and the NCNC and which led to the emergence of these splinter parties threatened Nigerian unity. They were the background factors for the first military coup in Nigeria in January, 1966. Corruption, stagnating economic conditions, decline of party prestige, unstable social situations, and political schisms, have been isolated as some of the factors responsible for military intervention in African politics.[46] The event of January 15, 1966 in Nigeria was, therefore, largely inevitable, considering the high level of economic, social, and political deterioration in the midst of plenty.

Opinions are varied on the objectives of the January coup. For one thing, the said coup d'etat was led by a young Igbo army major, Chukwuma Nzeogwu, and the composition of the group was mostly Igbo. Secondly, the casualties of the coup were mostly non-Igbo. They included the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa

Balewa, the Premier of the Northern Region (Ahmadu Bello), the Premier of the Western Region, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, and the Finance Minister, Festus Okotie-Eboh. These reasons have led some writers to argue that the coup was an Igbo attempt to take over the reins of central government from the Hausa-Fulani.

One of such writers is Margery Perham, a one-time colonial officer in Nigeria. According to her, "A group of Ibo Army Officers decided that nothing could save Nigeria from a complete Northern take-over but political assassinations".[47] The same insinuations were made by Anthony Enahoro, Yakubu Gowon's Labour and Information Minister and one of his best known negotiators during the war. At a peace meeting held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on August 1968, he stated that, "Ethnic groups tend to be chauvinistic but the Ibos were the most militantly chauvinistic and this naturally created apprehensions in the minds of others." He went on to say that:

> *The problem of Nigeria since independence has been the problem of some Ibo leaders and how to make them accept a basis of equality for every ethnic group in the Federation....*[48]

While Margery Perham's stance on the Nigeria-Biafra War could be blamed on traditional British attitude towards the southern part of Nigeria, Enahoro's invective on the Igbo is not too difficult to understand. In politics, a good politician is he, who, when paid, remains paid. He was a Minister in the Gowon-led government and has aptly been described as one of the hardliners who opposed any kind of compromise with the Biafrans and who was determined to fight out the war.[49] However, the point remains that the Nzeogwu-led coup neither sought to enthrone Igbo domination nor to destroy the country.[50]

The coup plotters meant to change the corrupt government and to continue the country. There were no ethnic motivations for the coup despite the heavy preponderance of Igbo officers among its planners. If Igbo military officers had

sought to win political power for the Igbo ethnic group, this would have involved deliberate planning between the junior and senior officers. Emeka Ojukwu and Aguiyi-Ironsi who quelled the coup at Kaduna and Lagos respectively, were themselves Igbo military officers as well. Both men took quick and brave actions, (albeit, at personal risk) to frustrate the plans of Nzeogwu and his group. If the putsch was intended to enthrone Igbo domination of Nigeria, both Ojukwu and Ironsi would have willingly collaborated with Nzeogwu and his men for that purpose. The fact therefore, that this was not the case is a clear evidence that the coup had no ethnic agenda. The coup plotters felt that Nigeria was sick and needed an urgent surgery.

Furthermore, the ethnic composition of the plotters cannot be justifiably adduced to label the coup as Igbo-inspired. For one thing, about half the middle officer ranks in the Nigerian army in 1966 were Sandhurst-trained Igbo, some of who were university graduates[51]. There were other Southerners within this rank but very few Northerners. This generation of soldiers were obviously dissatisfied with the status-quo position of the establishment politicians. Being idealistic, they wanted to rid Nigeria of corrupt and inefficient politicians. It is also likely that most of these officers had been classmates and here, loyalty to classroom and rank mattered more than ethnic origins.[52]

Perhaps the best argument on the real motivations of the January 1966 coup d'etat is that provided by John de St. Jorre who has written what could be regarded as the most objective account of the Nigeria - Biafra War. The seasoned war correspondent contends that:

> *The January coup...was not part of a Machiavellian Ibo plot to take over the Federation. The young majors who planned and executed it genuinely felt they were performing a painful but necessary piece of surgery to restore Nigeria's failing health. But they bungled... and*

> *in the contagious atmosphere of bewilderment and suspicion which clung to these events and which the government of the day did little to dispel, the botched result increasingly began to look like an Ibo nationalist conspiracy.*[53]

The failure of the Ironsi-led regime to try and punish the coup plotters accordingly led to a misinterpretation of the January coup. It also had the negative effect of splitting the army into antagonistic groups along ethnic lines. What followed could be regarded as the major immediate cause of the war. The joyous mood[54] which followed the January 15 coup d'état suddenly gave way to anti-Igbo reactions which took their toll on Igbo military leaders and civilians alike. Put succinctly, a combination of tragic events forced the Igbo to attempt to secede from Nigeria. The most important of these was the large-scale massacre of Igbo and other Eastern Nigerians resident in the North.

In the words of James O'Connell:

> *In the months after the military took power, ousted Hausa-Fulani leaders, some bureaucrats and a few embittered traditionalists fostered the targeting of Ibos in their midst as somehow responsible for the frustrations facing Northern society.... The violent outburst against the Ibos in which hundreds were killed and thousands fled the region, was incited and organized by these elements.*[55]

The pogroms which lasted from May till October 1966 and which claimed as many as eight thousand Igbo lives, were planned and executed with extreme brutality far out of proportion with the few killings occasioned by the January coup. By July 1966, a group of Northern army officers led by Theophilus Danjuma, staged a counter-coup, abducted and murdered General Aguiyi-Ironsi who was visiting the Western Region. His host, and the then Governor of the Western Region, Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi, was also murdered. Among the major

reasons for the July 1966 counter-coup was the fear of the Northern oligarchy that Ironsi's promulgation of Decree Number 39 of 24th May, 1966 which sought to make Nigeria a unitary state, would 'reinforce' Igbo 'domination' of the federation.

The said decree was aimed at achieving unity by curtailing ethnicism. But its promulgation was not a well-advised action because tempers were still high following the events of the preceding months. Ironsi's death was closely linked to this decree and its misinterpretation by the leaders of the West and the North. While the latter wanted to maintain their regional identity as provided for in the federal arrangement, the Yoruba favoured a strong federal arrangement that would enable them to stay together as one indivisible regional bloc of people. Moreover, apart from the Northern leaders' apprehension over the unification of the Federal Civil Service, they were also annoyed by the promotion in the military which favoured many Igbo officers.

But these promotions were not a deliberate attempt to reward Igbo officers. It has already been stated that most of the university-educated officers in the Nigerian military were of Southern Nigerian origins. Also, promotions are usually done at specified periods. That these promotions were made is not the issue, though. The issue is that Ironsi did not take a wise decision in this case. The period was inauspicious, given the general mood in the nation at that particular time.

However, his death saw the emergence of Yakubu Gowon as Nigeria's new military Head of State. Before his ascendancy, the leaders of the counter-coup were bent on the North seceding from the country. But they were persuaded to abandon that stand by top northern civil servants who foresaw a social and economic disaster for the North if it seceded.[56] The death of Ironsi and the emergence of Yakubu Gowon exacerbated northern unity which had witnessed its highest point during the massacres of May 1966. Not only did Gowon fail to

preserve civil order when he assumed office and thus put a stop to the pogroms and bloodsheds, his character and indecisiveness further plunged Nigeria into thirty months of what is regarded as perhaps one of the bloodiest wars in modern history.[57] Hundreds of thousands of Igbo and other Easterners had been murdered in the North and about two million had scuttled back to the East. A series of meetings were held both in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Aburi in Ghana, all aimed at finding a solution to the Nigerian problem.

On January 4-5, 1967 at as peace meeting held in Aburi, Ghana, both Yakubu Gowon and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the military governor of the Eastern Region, agreed on the following:

1. The re-organization, administration and control of the army.
2. Procedures for making appointments and promotions to the senior ranks in the armed forces, the police, diplomatic and consular services, and super-scale posts in the Federal Civil Service and statutory corporations.
3. Creation of a committee to look into the problems of rehabilitation and recovery of property for displaced persons.
4. Payment of full salaries up to March 31 to employees of government and statutory corporations, who had to leave their posts as a result of the crisis, provided they had not found alternative employment.[58]

In other words, the communiqué issued at Aburi agreed to both a protective decentralization and the payment in full of the salaries of those Easterners who had fled their posts in government departments and statutory corporations during the pogroms in the North. However, Gowon was later to find out on arrival in Lagos that his advisers, especially Awolowo and Enahoro,[59] felt that he had gone rather too far in meeting Eastern demands. These men, according to O'Connell, were the sources of many of Gowon's ideas, judgments and even decisions.[60] He was told

for instance, that his promise of continued salary payments was prohibitively expensive.[61]

Thus, on January 26, 1967, Gowon addressed a press conference where he reaffirmed his commitment to the maintenance of central authority. This had a double impact: it aroused the fear of the devolutionists by seeking to allay the fears of the federalists. In as much as he did not claim to have abandoned the provisions of the Aburi agreement, Gowon's ambivalence and the wordings of his inaugural speech gave little comfort to the traumatized Igbo. According to him, "... the basis of trust and confidence in our unitary system of government has not been able to stand the test of time... the basis for unity is not there.[62]

At the time that Gowon was stalling on the implementation of the Aburi agreement, Ojukwu was under intense pressures from the victims of the pogroms to ensure the payment of compensations to them. He, like many other Easterners, felt betrayed by Gowon's ambivalence and delay tactics, and he threatened to enforce the agreements unilaterally unless they were put into effect by the end of March, 1967. Ojukwu's government had given three million pounds sterling (£3 million) to the displaced Igbo and other Easterners as against Gowon's paltry sum of three hundred thousand pound sterling (£300,000).[63]

In fact, nothing explains the immediate cause of the civil war as the observation on that:

> *In its drive towards secession, Enugu was often aided and abetted by the actions of the federal government. The failure of the federal government to express its regret publicly over the massacres and to compensate the victims adequately, Gowon's tough 30th November (1966) speech, threatening to use force, the confusion, blundering and backtracking after Aburi and, particularly, the failure to pay eastern federal civil servants their salaries up to 31st March, promised unequivocally in the Aburi agreements, all made the*

eastern government's task of convincing the people that Gowon and his supporters were devils incarnate, immeasurably easier.[64]

As a matter of fact, the pogroms and Gowon's failure to compensate the victims left the Igbo and other Easterners in a state of shocked alienation. They encouraged Ojukwu to seize federal revenues in the Eastern Region and to declare the Republic of Biafra. Their dream materialized on July 6, 1967 with the proclamation of the Republic of Biafra. To counter Ojukwu's moves, Gowon created twelve states, dissolving thereby the old regional arrangement. Out of the twelve states created, the ethnic minorities in the Eastern Region were given two, while the majority Igbo group had one. Gowon's aim was obvious, namely, to extend to the ethnic minorities in Biafra the sweet aroma of 'freedom' from Igbo 'domination' and thus, sabotage Biafra.[65]

Gowon even called on the Igbo to overthrow Ojukwu. This appeal failed flatly to elicit any anti-Ojukwu responses and, as has been observed, "...there were no signs... that the mass of the Ibo, whatever the cost, would wish to overthrow their leader and sue for peace".[66] Those who called for Biafra were moved by the bitter emotion of their relatives who were killed or maimed during the pogroms and by the agonizing spectacle of the wretched condition of the survivors. In the words of B.O. Nwabueze:

The planned massacre of 1966 of thousands of Igbos resident in the North, the unwillingness or inability of the federal government to protect them and their properties against such acts of wanton destruction, the constant state of fear and insecurity in which they had to live, the possibility that the pogroms might be re-enacted following the cyclic pattern it had taken in May, July and September 1966, the consequent mass exodus of Igbos (numbering some one to two million) from the rest of Nigeria back to the safety of their homes in Eastern Nigeria, the failure to keep faith over all agreements

> *reached among the military leaders at Aburi, Ghana, on the form of association for Nigeria--these and other acts of oppression combined to produce in the Igbos a feeling that they were no longer wanted in the federation.*[67]

As far as most Igbo and other Easterners were concerned therefore, the events of 1966 destroyed their consciousness of a common citizenship with other Nigerians. The failure of Gowon to do anything to help the victims also erased their respect for his government. His abrogation of Decree Number 8 of 1967 which dealt with the concessions made to the Easterners at the Aburi Conference of January 1967 did not go down well with them. The Igbo, like other Easterners, were, therefore, a frightened people seeking refuge from a scaring communal experience. But the Gowon regime saw them as a collection of inveterate trouble-makers led by a "... greedy, ambitious, boastful, reckless, pompous, determined and unpatriotic demagogue."[68]

Admittedly, if Gowon and his principal advisers could be blamed for being the catalyst that was responsible for the outbreak of war in 1967, Ojukwu cannot be absolved of the same blame. It is true that he was under intense pressure to ensure compensation for the legitimate grievances of the Eastern refugees. But he did not give the Gowon regime enough rope to hang itself. That is to say, Gowon's ambivalence notwithstanding, Ojukwu and his advisers had not exhausted all avenues for peaceful resolution of the crisis before declaring an independent Republic of Biafra. Thus, as has been suggested, but for the selfishness, intransigence and lack of good faith and of an accommodating spirit on the part of both Gowon and Ojukwu, (especially of the former), the war could have been avoided.[69]

The personal angle to the crisis was the fact that Ojukwu did not think that Gowon was the next in command in the Nigerian Armed Forces to succeed Ironsi. Brigadier Ogundipe was the next highest ranking officer in the army, and

following military tradition he was to have succeeded Ironsi. But he was intimidated into resigning from the army by a non-commissioned Northern Nigerian soldier, and eventually accepted to serve as Gowon's High Commissioner to Britain.[70] Moreover, Ojukwu was himself not only Gowon's superior in the army, but was also the son of Nigeria's first millionaire and was far more educated than Gowon. These, more than anything else, probably informed his intransigence as much as they also explain Gowon's lack of good faith in his meetings with Ojukwu. Obviously, Gowon was suffering from a huge inferiority complex vis-a-vis Ojukwu.

This notwithstanding, the fact remains that the war was forced on the people of the former Eastern Region. Igbo ethnic nationalism was not a cause of the war, but it served to sustain Biafra throughout the three years of its horrendous existence. The moral case of the short-lived republic lay essentially in the pogroms of 1966 and Gowon's failure to redress the wrongs done to the Easterners. As a matter of fact, Igbo 'clannishness' or ethnic nationalism only assumed greater relevance between 1966 and 1970 following the events of 1966. The pogroms were, thus, a unique reason for Igbo solidarity. The Igbo were transformed, so to say, from being the strongest supporters of one united Nigeria into die-hard fanatical ethnic nationalists.[71]

Secession was, thereby, transformed from a contingency plan into inevitability, and the previous pan-Nigeria nationalism of the Igbo was turned inward to Igbo ethnic nationalism which survived three years of unequalled military assault. The common and shared experience of anti-Igbo brutality and persecution dissipated communal differences within the Igbo community and reinforced their faith in Biafra. According to Robert Norton, one feature of ethnicity is that it is an affirmation of worth and prerogative that can be made outside of and in spite of an on-going relationship of work and the economy.[72] In

the case of the Igbo in Biafra, ethnicity became a basis for political solidarity between social strata and it galvanized Igbo ethnic consciousness. In other words, Igbo ethnic pride, as evidenced in the Biafran example, transcended differences of status and power among the people.

Igbo ethnic nationalism since the reconstruction era

Despite the support it got from other countries like France, Haiti, Israel, China, Portugal, Tanzania, Zambia, Cote D'Ivoire, Gabon and the Vatican, Biafra collapsed on January 10, 1970. The mood of the average Igbo at the end of the war is best gleamed from Jean Herskovits' encounter with an Igbo business-man at Enugu. Quoting the said businessman, Herskovits observed that:

> *Before the war the Iboman moved out, and he made money, and he invested the money where he made it...but now...he moves all over the country again, but the money comes back home. We need it now, but even when we don't we have learned that it should come back home.*[73]

What must have been responsible for this loss of faith in Nigeria, considering the fact that the victorious Gowon-led Federal Government was 'magnanimous' in granting general amnesty to all Biafrans? It is true that at the end of the war in 1970, the Federal Government set up a commission to ensure the reconstruction of the former Republic of Biafra and to rehabilitate the people.[74] But subsequent actions by the Federal Government against the Igbo were nothing short of subtle policy of mass punishment and war indemnity.[75] Thus, answers to the question posed above are to be found in such government actions and policies that served to add to the misery of the Easterners, especially the Igbo. These policies humiliated the Igbo and further increased their feeling of alienation.

The first of these was the Banking Obligations (Eastern States) Decree of 1970, which provided that all monies lodged in Biafran banks during the war remained forfeited if any sum was ever withdrawn or added in the course of the war. In other words, full effect was given to withdrawals, but deposits made into bank accounts in the former Biafra after the date of secession (May 31, 1967), were not recognized. Moreover, the use of the Biafran currency issued in January 1968 was prohibited as from December 31, 1967 in consequence of the change of currency by Nigeria.[76] It is claimed that the nullification of the bank accounts of the Igbo yielded a profit of about four million British Pounds Sterling (£4 million) to the Federal Government treasury.[77] But the Igbo were pauperized, though the Federal Government gave a twenty pound sterling (£20.00) extra-gratia award to all persons from the former Republic of Biafra. It did not matter how much such persons had in their bank accounts before the war.

Secondly, while the Easterners were still trying to recover from the financial ruination into which they had been thrown, the Nigerian business indigenization policy was implemented. The Igbo people and other Easterners did not have the means to benefit from the transfer of foreign ownership of businesses to Nigerians. They had neither the economic resources nor the patronage of the financial houses because the Banking Obligations Decree had emasculated them economically and psychologically. Foreign-owned businesses were, therefore, transferred to the Yoruba who had the advantage of not only having one of their own (Awolowo) as Gowon's de facto second-in-command, but also had Lagos, Nigeria's commercial nerve-centre, as part of Yorubaland.

Another very obnoxious policy was employed to put the Igbo 'in their place'. This was the promulgation of the Abandoned Properties Implementation Decree of 1979. The Igbo were, through this decree, divested of hundreds of their landed properties in Port Harcourt and other parts of Nigeria in favour of the

indigenes of such places who claimed to have captured them as war booty. The decree provided that Igbo properties thus acquired and disposed of in those towns, especially Port Harcourt, "shall be deemed to have been lawfully and properly made".[78]

It is instructive to state, at this juncture, that these policies were implemented by the Federal Government presided over by Gowon and assisted by Awolowo and Enahoro. The regime provided funds for the so-called indigenes of Rivers State to purchase the so-called "abandoned properties." Loans were also extended to other Nigerians to enable them buy shares in businesses that were hitherto owned and controlled by foreigners[79]. The Igbo were deliberately barred from reclaiming their landed property located outside Igboland and from participating in the buying of shares of privatised foreign-owned businesses.

Moreover, these policies, which sought to exclude the Igbo from the commanding heights of the Nigerian economy after the war, were pursued relentlessly by the Murtala Muhammed/Olusegun Obasanjo regime of 1976-1979. Additional states were created in 1976 by Mohammed, thus increasing the total number of states from twelve to nineteen. Of the nineteen states, the Hausa-Fulani controlled four - Sokoto, Bauchi, Kano and Kaduna, while the Yoruba also controlled four - Oyo, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos. However, the Igbo, who were equal to the Yoruba in population, were given only two states, namely, Imo and Anambra. The implication of this policy lay in the fact that since revenue allocation was based on the number of states, the standard of living of the Igbo was depressed. Additionally, occupational mobility was made more and more difficult by the new emphasis on 'state of origin' or 'statism'.[80] The Igbo were, thus, made an outright minority ethnic group through state creation.

Finally, a National Boundary Adjustment Commission was set up in 1975 and headed by Muhammed Nasir a Northerner. The Commission adjusted the

boundaries of the then Imo State and her neighbours in River and Cross River States. In so doing, it took away much of the natural resources which the then Imo State had.[81] Therefore, taking cognisance of these deliberate policies implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria and granted that the said government had stated that they was no victor nor vanquished at the end of the war in 1970, its magnanimity to the Igbo after the war was simply superficial.

In other words, if the Federal Government was magnanimous in granting general amnesty to all former Biafrans, it did worse things through the implementation of the decree on banking, abandoned property, and indigenization, as well as in states creation and boundary adjustment. These actions were obviously punitive and were, indeed, as crushing and ruinous in their effects on the Igbo people as the war itself. They were unjust and have eroded any genuine sense of nationalism in the Igbo, as clearly shown by the encounter which Herskovits had with the Igbo businessman soon after the war. In addition, the Igbo trait of dogged individualism has manifested its worst forms. Their loyalties, except in football matches involving Nigeria and another country, are no longer to the nation or even to the ethnic group, but to themselves.

However, the Igbo, as Margaret Peil, has observed, are still gregarious. In her words, "...now many of them are making friends widely".[82] In essence, therefore, the obvious decrease in Nigerian nationalism among the Igbo does not mean, ipso facto, that the consequences of the concept have been negated. Instead, the old interplay between contiguity and political consciousness is still alive. Moreover, there is the inevitability of belonging to one nation. There may be a rather fragile sense of national identity occasioned by the war of 1967 - 1970 and the punitive measures that followed its conclusion, but the Igbo are still Nigerians.

On a final note, it has to be stressed that there is no documentary evidence of the Igbo State Union having had any part, overt or covert, in the events that led to

the Nigeria-Biafra war. If anything, the events of May to September 1966 disorganized the Union and more or less paralyzed it. In other words, the Union was unable to do much to help the victims of the pogroms. Furthermore, the Public Order Decree of 1966 (amended version) sounded the death knell on the Igbo State Union and about twenty-six other named ethnic cultural unions. One probable reason why these unions were proscribed by the Aguiyi-Ironsi regime was the fear that they might capitalize on the chaotic situation in 1966 to cause ethnic disaffection.

ENDNOTES

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2. Okechukwu Edward Okeke, *"Igboland: An Overview"*, in Roseline Ndimele and Okechukwu Edward Okeke (eds), The Igbo People: History, Language and Literature, (Port Harcourt: African Entrepreneurship and Leadership Inititative, 2010), 4.
3. Okeke, *Igboland: An Overview*, 3.
4. Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War*. (Port Harcourt: Saros International Publishers, 1989), 177.
5. James O'Connell, *"Political Integration: The Nigerian Case"*, in Arthur Hazlewood (ed), African Integration And Disintegration. (London: OUP, 1967), 135. See also Emeka Ojukwu, *"The Biafran Story, Part II"*, Newswatch, October 5, (1992), 54
6. Stanley Lieberson, *"A Social Theory Of Race And Ethnic Relations"*, in Van den Berghe (ed), Intergroup Relations: Sociological Perspectives. (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1972), 39
7. Lawerence P. Frank, *"Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism"*. Journal of Modern African Studies, vol.17, No.3, (1979), 39
8. Smock and Smock, *Cultural and Political Aspects of Rural Transformation*, 304.
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10. Africa Contemporary Record, 1968-69
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12. Post and Vickers, *Structure and Conflict*, 119.
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14. Wellington Oga, *"There is Poison in Okpara's Chalice"*, Nigerian Daily Sketch, 10 December (1964).
15. Paul Anber, *"Modernization and Political Disintegration: Nigeria and the Ibos"* Journal of Modern Africa Studies, vol.5,No.2, (1967), 167.
16. Collin Legum, *"Can Nigeria Escape Its Past?"* Africa Report, March, (1969.)

17. O'Connell, *"Can Nigeria Escape Its Past?"*
18. Margareth Peil, *"Interethnic Contacts in Nigerian Cities"* Africa, vol.45, No.2, (1975), 111
19. Peil, *"Interethnic Contacts"*, 112.
20. Paul Anber, "*Modernization and Political Disintegration. Nigeria and the Ibos"*. Journal of Modern African Studies, 5, 2, (1967), 108.
21. Alhaji Balarabe Musa, *"Interview"*. Quality magazine, 27 October, 1988, vol.2 No.21, 40; See also Takena Tamuno, *"Beyond Faction: Who has the Monopoly of Historical Truth?"*, The Guardian newspaper, Saturday March 23, (1991), 17
22. Bolaji Akinyemi, *"National Unity Within The Context Of Regional Relations: The Nigerian Experience"*, In David R.Smock and Kwamena Bentsi-Enchill (eds), The Search for National Integration in Africa. (NewYork: The Free Press, 1976), 69.
23. Balarabe Musa, *"Interview"*. Quality magazine, 40.
24. Quoted in J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background To Nationalism,* 361.
25. Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom.* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1947), 47-48.
26. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *West African Pilot*, July 6, (1949). He stated, inter alia, that:

> ...it would appear that the God of Africa has specifically created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages... the martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of preserver... The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility...

27. Stanley Diamond, *"The Biafran possibility"* African Report, vol.13, No.2 February (1968), 19. See also Margery Perham's observation that, "It may be well to remind ourselves that the people of the Eastern Region who tried to break away had been the most eager to achieve Nigerian unification". (*"Preface"*, in James Robertson, Transition in Africa: From Direct Rule to Independence. London: OUP, 1974).
28. See, for instance, I.M. Okonjo, *British Administration in Nigeria: 1900-1950: A Nigerian View*. Lagos: NOK Publishers, (1974); and Obaro Ikime (ed), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1984).
29. Arthur Jay Khinghoffer, *"Why The Soviets Chose Sides"*. Africa Report, vol.13, No.2, February (1968), 47
30. Okonjo, *British Administration in Nigeria*, 325.

31. M.C.K Ajuluchukwu, *"From Arthur Richards to Babangida"*, Sunday Times newspaper, September 2, (1990), 8.
32. G.O. Olusanya, however, believes otherwise. He rather blames ethnicism in Nigerian politics on Nigerian politicians. See G.O. Olusanya, *"Constitutional Developments in Nigeria, 1861-1960"*, in Ikime (ed), Groundwork of Nigerian History, 528.
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35. John de St. Jorre, *The Brothers' War: Biafra and Nigeria*: (Boston: Houston Mifflin Company, 1972), 15.
36. S.A. Aluko, *"How Many Nigerians: An Analysis of Nigeria's Census Problems, 1901-63"*, Journal of Modern African Studies, 3, (1965), 373.
37. Ahmadu Bello, *My Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 133-135. See also Coleman, *Nigeria: Background To Nationalism,*320.
38. Timothy Adebanjo, *"Beyond the Conflict"*. Africa Report, vol. 13, No.2, Februrary (1968), 12.
39. Donald Rothchild, *"Ethnicity and Conflict Resolution"*, World Politics vol.xxii, No.4, July, (1970), 603.
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41. John J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 4.
42. Ahmadu Bello, *My Life*, 228-229.
43. Turi Muhammadu and Mohammed Haruna; *"The Civil War"*, in Oyeleye Oyedran (ed), Nigerian Government and Politics under Military Rule, 11966-1970: (Lagos: The Macmillian Press Ltd, 1988), 26. See also A.H.M. Kirk Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria. Vol.2.* July 1967-January 1970. (London: OUP; 1971), 141-142.
44. Africa, vol.45, No.2 (1975), 33
45. Rene Lemarchard, *"Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-building"*. American Political Science Review. Vol.66, No.1 1972, 83.
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48. Perham, *"Nigeria's Civil War"*, 687
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51. John de St. Jorre, *The Brothers' War*.
52. Claude Welch, (ed), *Soldier and State in Africa*. See also Olusegun Obasanjo, *Nzeogwu*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1986).
53. John de St. Jorre, The Brothers' War.
54. St. Jorre, *The Brothers' War*. See also O'Connell, *"Political Integration: The Nigerian Case"*, in Hazzlewood(ed), African Integration and Disintegration, 174
55. James O'Connell, *"The Scope of the Tragedy"* Africa Report vol.13, No.2 February 1968.
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62. John de St. Jorre, *The Brothers' War*,
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64. St Jorre, *The Brothers' War*. 115.
65. African Concord Magazine, 24 April, 1989, 4
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APPENDIX:
IBO STATE UNION CONSTITUTION
MOTTO: Unity, Service, Progress

ARTICLE I TITLE:

This organization shall be called the "Ibo State Union".

ARTICLE II AIMS AND OBJECTS:

The aims of this organization shall be:

1. To devise ways and means whereby all the sons and daughters of Iboland, at home and abroad shall be brought together under one Union.

2. To promote cultural understanding among the various groups in Iboland at home and abroad.

3. To bring within the influence of the Union all Ibo and woman organizations at home and abroad.

4. To encourage educational progress of the Ibos at home and abroad.

5. To seek better understanding between Ibos and other linguistic groups in Nigeria and beyond.

ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP:

1. Membership shall be open to:

(a) All Ibo Unions at home and abroad (e.g) The Ibo Union, Port Harcourt, the Ibo Union Lagos, provided that each Ibo Union shall pay a registration fee of £2.21.

(b) Every Town, Clan, or District (e.g Asaba for Town, Ututu for Clan, and Northern Ngwa for District), provided that each town, clan or district shall pay a registration fee of £10:10s.

2. Membership of the Ibo State Union shall be of two kinds:

(a) Registered and (b) Nominal, and shall consist of the Ibo Unions (whether within or outside Iboland) comprising a mixed community of Ibo people, and of the Towns, Clans and Districts comprising the indigenous natives of such towns, clans or Districts.

3. (a) An Ibo Union or a Town, Clan or District desiring membership in the Ibo State Union shall apply to the Executive through the Secretariat, remitting with the application the registration fee of £2:2s (two guineas) or £10:10s (ten guineas) respectively.

(b)All unregistered Ibo Union, Towns, Clans or Districts, shall be nominal members of the Ibo State Union.

4. An Ibo Union shall belong to one of the following grades: A, B, or C, and shall be entitled to be represented at each Ibo State Assembly by 4, 3, or 2 representatives respectively.

5. Each Town, Clan, or District shall be entitled to be represented at every Ibo State Assembly by six representatives.

6. Every member unit shall pay an annual contribution equivalent to its grade or class as decided by the Assembly.

7. All documents received from the Principal Secretary, or considered at meetings and committees, shall be regarded as private and confidential and shall not be published or made public property without the consent of the Executive Committee.

8. Each member unit shall forward to the Executive Committee through the Secretariat by the 1st week of November a report of its activities for the year.

9. A member of a unit shall automatically be known as a registered or nominal member of the Ibo State Union.

ARTICLE IV GOVERNMENT:

1. The supreme authority of the Ibo State Union shall be vested in the Ibo State Assembly which shall decide broad questions of policy and consider matters referred to it by the Executive Committee.

2. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the general administration of the business of the Union in the interval between every two Annual Assemblies. Forty persons shall constitute the Executive Committee, and every Division in Ibo land shall be represented thereon provided that the Executive Committee shall have the power to co-opt members as it deems necessary. The co-opted members shall have voting right.

3. No one shall be a representative to the Assembly who is not an active member of a member unit.

4. The Assembly shall meet at least twice yearly, in June and in December, at such a time and place as shall be decided by the Executive Committee. At least two months clear notice shall have been given by the Executive Committee, provided that a failure of such a notice of two months when a quorum is formed, shall not debar the holding of such a meeting.

5. THE ASSEMBLY QUORUM:

The Assembly Quorum shall consist of the President or Vice-President, or one other member of the Executive Committee appointed to be on the chair by the House, and ten member units.

6. The Assembly shall have power:

(a) To amend, repeal or remake the constitution.
(b) To elect and to remove any officer from office.
(c) To discipline any Ibo man, woman or member unit.
(d) To make any levy on the member units or the individual members thereof.
(e) To decide any appeal against the decision of the Executive Committee.
(f) To inaugurate any action or series of actions, or arrange programmes likely to induce the Union to achieve its objects.

(g) To remit for further consideration of the Executive Committee any decision of that body, and to give such directions in relation thereto as may be deemed expedient.
(h) To govern the Executive Committee.
(i) To do such other things as may be necessary or desirable in the interest of the Union, but which are not expressly included in this constitution.

7. A Special Assembly shall be called by the Executive Committee should it be considered necessary or if it should be desired by one third of the member units. At least two weeks' notice of such Special Assembly shall be given to all member units, and where the interests of the Union or its members are not thereby endangered, all matters to be considered by the Special Assembly shall be submitted to the member units to enable them to give instructions to their representatives. The time and place of any Special Assembly shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

8. Every decision of every Ibo State Assembly shall be final and conclusive, and shall be binding upon all the member units.

9. No person or group of persons other than the elected representatives of the member units or the Executive of the Ibo State Union shall be allowed in the Assembly room during its deliberations without the express permission of the President or the Chairman. Persons admitted under this condition shall be allowed to participate in the deliberations, but shall have no vote.

10. Each member unit shall submit in advance to the Executive Committee the names of its representatives to the Assembly.

ARTICLE V HONORARY OFFICERS:

1. The honorary officers of the Ibo State Union shall be the President, the Vice-President, the Principal Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer, the Legal Advisor, and two Auditors.

2. The Assembly shall elect the honorary officers and thirty-one others who together shall constitute the Executive.

3. (a) The Executive shall hold office for three years, provided that the Assembly shall have the power to dissolve an inefficient Executive or remove from office any of its members found inefficient.

(b) The President, officers and members of the Executive Committee shall be eligible for re-election.

4. The President shall:

(a). Preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee and of the Assembly.

(b). Together with the Principal Secretary sign all vouchers and orders on the Treasury and countersign all Assembly summonses and important correspondence.

(c). Perform all other duties pertaining to his office.

5. (a) The Vice-President shall deputize for the President in his absence.

(b) In the absence of both the President and the Vice-President, the Executive Committee shall elect one of its members to preside at meeting.

6. The Principal Secretary shall under the direction of the President perform the following duties:

(a) Attend all the meetings of the Executive Committee and of the Assembly, and shall make and keep in the proper books provided for that purpose the minutes of the Executive Committee and of the Assembly;

(b) Conduct such correspondence as may be directed;

(c) Notify officers of their appointment;

(d) Prepare the order of business for each meeting of the Executive Committee and of the Assembly;

(e) Together with the President and the Treasurer sign all withdrawals from the bank;

(f) Keep a list of names and addresses of the member units and their respective representatives;

(g) Table at the Annual Assembly an Annual Report on the life and activities of the Union. The Annual Report shall have as its appendix the Treasurer's Balance Sheet certified by the Auditors after the Annual Auditing;

ARTICLE VI THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

1. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the general administration of the business of the Union, and for the government of the Union, in the intervals between every two Annual Assemblies.

2. Five members shall form a quorum for the Executive Committee, provided that the five members include the President or the Vice-President or the Principal Secretary.

3. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once every month with due notice, at such times and places as they or the President shall appoint.

4. The Executive Committee shall have power to appoint standing or sub-committees and to invest every such Committee with such powers of the Executive Committee as may be deemed necessary or advisable, and to define their duties. Appeal from the decision of any such Committee shall lie with the Executive Committee.

5. The Executive Committee shall administer the business and affairs of the Union, subject to the decisions of the Assembly, and it shall make all necessary arrangement for holding the Assembly.

ARTICLE XI BYLAWS:

Bylaws shall be made by the Executive Committee subject to the approval of the Assembly, but, in the interim, they shall have the force of law.

ARTICLE XII OTHER POINTS OF ADMINISTRATION:

1. The Principal Secretary shall be in-charge of the Secretariat. The Under-Secretary, who is the head of the paid secretaries or his deputy, shall sign for the Principal Secretary.
2. The President, the Principal Secretary and Treasurer shall be persons living near the Secretariat.
3. The Executive Committee of the Ibo State Union shall have the power to sue and to be sued.
4. All Ibo legislators, Regional or Central as well as the Hon. Ministers Regional or Central who are Ibos, shall have the power to vote in the Assembly.

GIVEN AT ABA THIS 24TH DAY OF MARCH 1951
AND
AMENDED AT ABA THIS 20TH DAY OF JUNE 1954

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Scriptum

This book seeks to understand the nature of ethnic politics in anti-colonial nationalism and nation-building by examining the integrative or disintegrative roles of the Igbo State Union in colonial and early independent Nigeria. When elite Igbo nationalists formed an ethnic union, it was not only ethnicity that was on their minds: they were also interested in anti-colonial nationalism as well as nation-building. In addition, they understood that achieving independence for Nigeria was the collective responsibility of all ethnic and interest groups in the country and that without concerted efforts, the objective will remain elusive. Integration was, therefore, not discretionary; it was an unconditional objection. To determine if the Igbo State Union was integrative or otherwise, the book surveys the background to ethnic nationalism in Nigeria in order to gain insights to the reasons for the founding of the Igbo State Union. It studies the aims and objectives of the Union to find if these were integrative or disintegrative and concludes that it did not in any way generate factors that favoured disunity in Nigeria. Rather, it worked for the unity of the Igbo in Nigeria and elsewhere.

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